Pastoral Care of Students Policy

MELBOURNE ARCHDIOCESE CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

Introduction

Pastoral care is a demonstration of profound respect for the human dignity of each person who is created in the image and likeness of God (Genesis 1: 26–27). This call to respect each person is inspired by the sacred Scriptures and brought to life by the person of Jesus Christ.

Jesus' life and teachings show all people 'the way, the truth and the life' (John 14: 6), inviting each to fullness (John 10:10). 'Throughout the Gospel, Jesus illuminates for us how we are called to live out our mission, approach our work and conduct our relationships with love, hope, dignity, compassion and forgiveness' (eXcel: Wellbeing for learning in Catholic school communities, 2018, p.4).

The origin of the phrase 'pastoral care' is in the image of Jesus as the Good Shepherd given to us in John's Gospel (John 10: 1–18). Here the Good Shepherd is the one who looks after his sheep and who is prepared to lay down his life for them. Likewise in the parable of the lost sheep (Luke 15: 1–7; Matthew 18: 12–14) is found the image of a shepherd who has compassion for the 'little ones' who are at risk. Pastoral care of students then, is the kind of care that is exemplified for us by the person of Jesus Christ.

The Church's teachings are central to the moral, legal and mission driven responsibility of all Catholic schools to create nurturing environments where children and young people are respected, their voices heard and where they are safe and feel safe. This is particularly so for the most vulnerable children, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children from culturally and /or linguistically diverse backgrounds, and children with disabilities (CECV Commitment Statement to Child Safety, 2016, p.1).

In Catholic schools, all relationships, including those with students, staff and parents/carers, are built on unconditional positive regard. Every person has a responsibility to understand the integral role they play, individually and collectively. For adults in Catholic schools, nurturing the pastoral care, wellbeing and safety of all children and young people is at the forefront of all that they do and every decision that they make.

'Pastoral care' is brought to life in Catholic school communities through the actions, interactions and attitudes of all community members. It is evident in the school's vision and mission statements, policies, procedures, curriculum, student support services and partnerships with parents, who are the first educators of their children (General Directory for Catechesis 226 & 227).

Purpose

The Pastoral Care of Students policy ensures that all Catholic schools in the Archdiocese of Melbourne have a pastoral care policy that documents strategies for creating and maintaining a school culture which ensures that children and young people are known, and feel safe, valued and respected. The school's pastoral care policy should articulate procedures and practices that:

- develop and enhance every students' wellbeing and sense of connectedness and belonging to their school as a faith-filled learning community
- cultivate safe, physical, emotional, mental, social and online environments that comply with relevant legislative and legal requirements.

Scope

This policy applies to all Catholic schools in the Archdiocese of Melbourne.

Definitions

Inclusion is the right to access and receive a full and engaging education (Introduction to the Principle of Inclusion: Child Safety in Catholic Schools in Victoria, 2018, p.4).

Catholic schools welcome all members of the community as equal, embracing diversity as a means for dialogue, engagement and deeper understandings of self, others and God. The uniqueness and sacred dignity of each person is celebrated, driven by the Gospel message of love and justice. These convictions guide the encounters, actions and pedagogical approaches that enable all children to learn and thrive (Introduction to the Principle of Inclusion: Child Safety in Catholic Schools in Victoria, 2018, p.4).

Pastoral care is a demonstration of profound respect for the human dignity of each person who is created in the image and likeness of God.

Pastoral care includes the decisions, structures and practices that nurture, support and assist a student to flourish and reach their spiritual, physical, cognitive, social and emotional potential so that they may come to a deeper understanding of their own humanness. The pastoral care of students in Catholic schools is focused on actions that promote health, wellbeing, resilience, academic outcomes, social capital and ethical decision making (Cross, 2014).

Student wellbeing is 'a sustainable state of positive mood and attitude, resilience, and satisfaction with self, relationships and experiences at school' (Noble & Wyatt, 2008, p.21).

In Catholic school settings, a positive sense of pastoral care and wellbeing supports a base for rich learning that enables children and young people to flourish, give expression to their authentic selves and realise their unique potential. This holistic view recognises the sacredness, dignity and giftedness of each person (Horizons of Hope: Wellbeing, 2017, p.3).

Principles

Pastoral care in Catholic school communities:

- involves a commitment to creating safe, supportive, inclusive and hope-filled learning environments of welcome where human dignity is respected, diversity and inclusiveness are valued and authentic relationships are fostered
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- nurtures the wellbeing of every child in a Catholic school, 'their unique story, giftedness and temperament must be understood and valued in a way that enables love, respect, compassion, forgiveness and hope to thrive' (Horizons of Hope: Wellbeing, 2017, p.3)
- ensures that all members of the school community are responsible for creating a positive pastoral climate. Staff, students and parents/carers share responsibility for developing and maintaining open and cooperative relationships characterised by respect, trust, goodwill and a willingness to engage collaboratively. It is vital that all members of the school community work together to provide a consistent and supportive environment in which students may develop and grow towards maturity
- identifies and nurtures partnerships with appropriate services and agencies in order to support the pastoral care and wellbeing needs of every student
- responds to the pastoral and wellbeing needs of students and maintains appropriate confidentiality and privacy. Information is communicated, with necessary permissions, to those who have a right or

a need to be informed, either legally or pastorally.

Policy

School communities in the Archdiocese of Melbourne demonstrate effective pastoral care through the following strategies.

1. **Melbourne Archdiocese Catholic Schools** supports schools to develop their pastoral care and wellbeing strategies by:

    1.1. providing coherent policy frameworks, guidance and resources (refer to External References section)
    1.2. developing targeted professional learning
    1.3. monitoring compliance through existing protocols including cyclical review as part of school improvement and Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority (VRQA) requirements.

2. **Principals and school leaders** enhance their school's pastoral care and wellbeing by:

    2.1. utilising MACS Policy 2.26 Pastoral Care of Students, Horizons of Hope education framework, eXcel: Wellbeing for learning in Catholic school communities, Identity and growth: A perspective for Catholic schools and the Australian Student Wellbeing Framework as the basis to inform and guide their curriculum planning, policies and practices
    2.2. supporting staff, through appropriate professional learning, to strengthen their understanding of core Catholic principles including the sanctity of human life and the inherent dignity of the human person
    2.3. engaging students and their parents/carers to collaboratively develop and periodically review practices
    2.4. ensuring whole-school approaches are known, understood and readily accessible to all members of the community.

3. **Teachers and school staff** support the pastoral care and wellbeing of students by:

    3.1. creating and maintaining safe, inclusive and respectful learning environments that enable the unique potential, gifts and innate qualities of each child to unfold and thrive
    3.2. understanding their duty of care and accountability in regard to legislation and compliance
    3.3. using relationship-based approaches to establish consistent expectations for behaviour
    3.4. working in partnership with parents/carers and families to build resilience and promote a positive sense of self.

4. **Students** contribute to developing positive pastoral learning environments and their own and other's wellbeing by:

    4.1. treating all members of the school community with respect and courtesy
    4.2. following school policies, procedures and guidelines
    4.3. taking responsibility for their actions
    4.4. reporting all concerns about wellbeing and safety
    4.5. cooperating with teachers, school staff and their parents/carers.

5. **Parents/guardians/carers** contribute to developing positive pastoral learning environments for their own and other children's wellbeing by:

    5.1. working respectfully, collaboratively and in partnership with staff and members of the school community to create high expectations
    5.2. explicitly teaching, modelling and promoting socially responsible behaviours
    5.3. promoting and upholding the core values of the school by supporting school policies and procedures.

Procedures

1. **School policy and procedures**
   1.1. Schools must have a pastoral care policy in place
   1.2. In developing and enacting the pastoral care policy, schools must ensure the policy is:
      a. tailored to the local context of the school
      b. made publicly available (i.e. on the school website)
      c. communicated to the school community on a regular basis
      d. regularly reviewed and considered
      e. integrated into other school policies and procedures, curriculum and key school documents.
2. **School environment**
   2.1. Catholic schools are bound to provide a safe and nurturing environment where the risk of harm is minimised and students feel safe.
   2.2. School communities are required to take reasonable and proportionate measures to provide safe and enabling learning environments which encompass the spiritual, mental, physical and emotional wellbeing of the student.

External references

Related Policies – Department of Education and Training (DET)

Policy and Advisory Library

Related Resources – Melbourne Archdiocese Catholic Schools

eXcel: Wellbeing for learning in Catholic school communities

Horizons of Hope: Vision and Context

Horizons of Hope: Wellbeing

Horizons of Hope: Learning Diversity

Identity and growth: A perspective for Catholic schools

Related Resources – Australian Government

Australian Student Wellbeing Framework (2018)

Student Wellbeing Hub

Related Legislation

Children and Young Persons Act 1989 (Vic.)

Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (Vic.)

Education and Training Reform Act 2006 (Vic.)

Information Privacy Act 2000 (Vic.)

Victorian Institute of Teaching Act 2001 (Vic.)

Working with Children Act 2006 (Vic.)

References

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Cross, D 2014, 'Creating a safe school culture is a process not an event: Practical evidence for systems, schools and teachers working with students with additional needs', paper presented to the Australian Association of Special Education Conference.

Noble, T & Wyatt 2008, *Scoping study into approaches to student wellbeing: Literature review*, Australian Catholic University and Erebus International, Sydney. Retrieved 29 January 2019 from https://docs.education.gov.au/documents/scoping-study-approaches-student-wellbeing-final-report