

Framework for the  
Development of  
PASTORAL CARE  
in Catholic Schools

CATHOLIC EDUCATION OFFICE  
OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

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## RATIONALE

*Pastoral Care in a Catholic School* is informed by and given its spirit by the school's place as a part of the evangelical ministry of the Church. The Catholic school is in essence the face of Christ for its whole community and its pastoral role needs to infuse every aspect of its operation and its relationships.

The life of every human person is seen to have a God given value and meaning which is enhanced *in a school community whose atmosphere is permeated with the Gospel spirit of Freedom and Love*<sup>1</sup>. All members of the school community have a fundamental right to be treated with respect and, for students and school staff, to learn and teach in a safe and supportive environment<sup>2</sup>.

Pastoral Care is the concern of all involved in Catholic education. Every aspect of the school's educational ministry needs to be infused by the Church's understanding of what it means to be a community of believers. Pastoral Care cannot be confined to organisational or curriculum areas. There should be a clear articulation of specific ways that Pastoral Care will assist in developing the potential of each member in the school community such that all feel nurtured, safe, supported and educated.

Parents (and guardians or carers) are the first educators of their children and the role of the Catholic school is to assist in their education<sup>3</sup>. Each school should appreciate the circumstances of its own community and apply the appropriate resources to meet pastoral needs within a shared vision of a positive and inclusive school.

Catholic schools operate within an organisational framework that has particular requirements in relation to the educational and social needs of students and staff. Catholic schools are also bound to adhere to the legislative requirements of State and Australian Governments. Pastoral Care policies and practices must adhere to these obligations.

## DEFINING PASTORAL CARE

*Pastoral Care in Catholic Schools* means enhancing the dignity of each person within a Catholic faith community. It is concerned with maximising learning and growth to enable all to become inner-directed, contributing members of God's creation.

## PRINCIPLES

1. Catholic schools provide a safe and supportive school environment, a curriculum and a set of policies and practices based on the Gospels.
2. Catholic schools enable students to attain the beliefs, values, attitudes, knowledge, skills, practices and positive relationships which will allow them to achieve Christ's vision of the human person.
3. Catholic schools are environments where the care and development of each person takes place within the Catholic faith community.
4. Catholic schools develop policies, programs and practices that are proactive, focus on prevention and intervention and that engage, nurture and promote the wellbeing of the whole school community.
5. Catholic schools promote care, respect and cooperation and value diversity.
6. Catholic schools recognise that quality leadership underpins Pastoral Care and that policies and programs must be regularly monitored and reviewed with evidence-based practice supporting decisions and improvements.
7. Catholic schools take action to protect children from all forms of abuse and neglect.
8. Catholic schools ensure that, in providing a nurturing and safe environment, the roles and responsibilities of all members of the school community are explicit and understood and that there is a commitment to ongoing professional development and training for the whole school community.

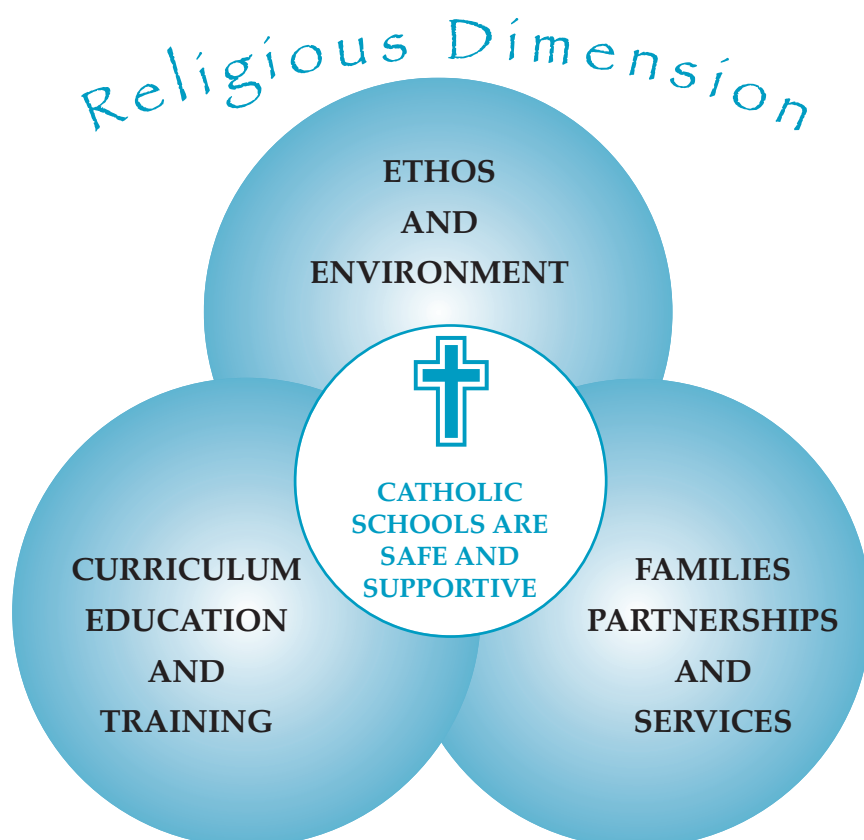
## ELEMENTS OF PASTORAL CARE

Formulation of a school's Pastoral Care policy requires a collaborative approach and consideration of the following elements:

### 1. ETHOS AND ENVIRONMENT

The ethos and environment of a Catholic school should be thoroughly infused with the Catholic vision of Pastoral Care. The Evangelisation Plan of the school should provide a strong basis through which Pastoral Care is developed. Examples of the aspects pertaining to these elements are as follows:

## A MODEL FOR PASTORAL CARE IN CATHOLIC SCHOOLS



### RELIGIOUS DIMENSION

- z Prayer, liturgy, celebration and participation in the Sacraments
- z Reflection of values of the Sacraments in school policies and practices e.g. acceptance and forgiveness

### ADMINISTRATIVE SECTOR

- z School values, ethos, mission statement, motto, culture and structure
- z Quality and style of leadership
- z Managing incidents of abuse and victimisation
- z Support for students
- z Pastoral Care of staff and the broader school community
- z Strategic management plan involving consultation, involvement, participation and ownership
- z Establishment of agreed policies, programs and procedures (including those of the CECWA and those required by legislation)

- z The whole school community is conversant with the school's Pastoral Care policies and practices and of individual rights and responsibilities

### POLICIES AND PRACTICES

The policies and practices that a school employs should enhance the dignity of the human person. All policies and practices should reflect the principles of Pastoral Care. The following are examples of such policies and practices:

#### Student

- Behaviour management
- Managing bullying, harassment and violence
- Child protection
- Duty of care

#### School Community

- Reporting and communication
- Parent/guardian/carer engagement
- Reconciliation
- Privacy

## Management

- Allocation of resources
- Enrolment policy
- Response to drug use
- Uniform requirements and standards
- Crisis management plan
- Management of confidential information
- Boarding house management

## School Personnel

- Employment, professional and faith development
- Professional development of all staff in areas that reflect on Pastoral Care
- Management of harassment of staff in schools
- Dispute and complaint resolution
- Health and wellbeing of staff

## 2. FAMILIES, PARTNERSHIPS & SERVICES

This element recognises that real partnerships need to exist between the Catholic school, parents, carers and appropriate agencies for students to be provided with a nurturing and safe environment.

- z Working closely with parents, guardians and carers
- z Interpersonal relationships within the school community
- z Relationships with the parish, clergy, religious orders, parent community and past students
- z Reconciliation
- z Relevant cultural aspects are acknowledged and celebrated
- z Awareness and support of those who are alienated

## 3. CURRICULUM, EDUCATION & TRAINING

Curriculum is the total, school-directed experience of students during schooling<sup>4</sup>. The curriculum needs to be informed by the principles of Pastoral Care catering for a variety of student needs and abilities in a Catholic school setting.

Appropriate levels of education, training and professional development relating to school policy and practice should be available to all members of the school community.

The following aspects of curriculum, education and training are considered:

- z Needs of all students
- z Provision of an adaptable and flexible curriculum
- z Appropriate methods of assessment, evaluation and reporting
- z A curriculum informed by the principles of Catholic Social Justice teachings
- z Acquisition of concepts, the learning of facts, development of life skills, examination of attitudes and an exploration of their beliefs and values
- z Explicit education and training in relation to bullying, harassment, violence and child protection available to the whole school community

## CONCLUSION

Pastoral Care in Catholic schools is concerned with enhancing the dignity of the human person within a safe and supportive Catholic faith community.

The aims and purpose of this Framework are to assist schools in developing and refining its approach to Pastoral Care.

The elements set out above are not exhaustive, but they are intended to provide a stimulus in examining Pastoral Care in a Catholic school.

Policies need to be evolving and to include a review process inbuilt every 3–5 years so that the unintended consequences are addressed.

It is through the dynamic and inter-related nature of the elements that the dignity of the human person is enhanced.

## REFERENCES

- <sup>1</sup>Second Vatican Council (1965), *Declaration on Christian Education*, Dominican Publishers.
- <sup>2</sup>National Safe Schools Framework (2003), Curriculum Corporation (MCEETYA).
- <sup>3</sup>Bishops of Western Australia (1993), *Mandate Letter from the Bishops of WA, #7*, Catholic Education Office, WA.
- <sup>4</sup>Ministerial Committee to Review Curriculum Development (1995), *Review of School Curriculum Development Procedures and Processes in WA*, Education Policy and Coordination Bureau, WA.