



*Mary Help of Christians Primary School*  
**SAWTELL**

## **PASTORAL CARE POLICY**

<b>Status:</b>	Current
<b>Date Issued:</b>	April 2021
<b>Evaluation and Review:</b>	April 2022

### **Standard Operating Procedure:**

#### **Rationale:**

Pastoral Care is central to the mission of Catholic education having its origins in the Judeo-Christian belief that each person is made in the image and likeness of God and deserves to be treated accordingly. Pastoral Care is the lived expression of the new commandment of Jesus Christ: "Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another" (John 13:34). Hence, the inspiration and basis for Pastoral Care in Catholic education is founded in Jesus Christ and the living out of the Christian way of life embedded in the Gospels and teaching of the Church. This means that Catholic schools must be experienced as Christ centred communities. When transformed this way, they offer each student the best opportunity to choose what Jesus Christ can provide, namely, a full, meaningful and abundant life (John 10:10) for he is 'the way, the truth and the life' (John 14:6).

Centred on Jesus Christ and the abiding presence of the Holy Spirit, Pastoral Care is therefore essentially a relational way of life in which every member of the school community is cared for, respected and valued, reflecting the God given dignity of each person. This relational way of life is nurtured and sustained through lives centred on Jesus Christ, a rich prayer life and participation in the

Christian sacraments. Building upon these foundations Pastoral Care is expressed in love, respect, solidarity, compassion, tolerance, forgiveness, healing, reconciliation and social justice.

Pastoral Care therefore encompasses actions taken within a school by its leaders and community members to promote and enhance personal, social, physical, emotional, mental and spiritual wellbeing. Given that pastoral care seeks to promote such wholeness and deep inner strength, wellbeing is viewed as an outcome of Pastoral Care. These actions are evident across all domains of practice in parish schools.

Pastoral Care is a shared responsibility amongst priests, the Catholic Schools Office and school staff, students, parents and other family members, and members of the wider school community. It is the unifying focus of Catholic education, and an authentic expression of the vision and mission of the school. All parish school policies and procedures should be intrinsically linked and aligned to it.

### **Scope:**

This Policy applies to all members of the school community as defined in the Policy and sets out to maintain standards of practice, activities and behaviour that contribute positively to Pastoral Care, and enhance and promote the wellbeing of all within Mary Help of Christians School.

Principles: The following Principles underpin and permeate an agreed understanding of Pastoral Care such that it enhances wellbeing at Mary Help of Christians Catholic Primary School within the Diocese of Lismore:

1. Pastoral Care has as its focus the life of Jesus Christ, that students might be enabled to choose the fullness of life (John 10:10)
2. Pastoral Care is concerned with the inherent dignity of each person.
3. The Catholic Worldview infuses every aspect of Pastoral Care in Catholic schools.
4. Pastoral Care is a concern of all persons involved in Catholic education, under the leadership of the school Principal.
5. Pastoral Care is enacted through, and embedded within, reciprocal relationships – including student-teacher; student-student; teacher-teacher; principal-teacher; parent-teacher, priest-student; priest-teacher and other relationships.
6. Effective relationships incorporate dimensions of authentic recognition – in which individuals feel and are cared for, respected and valued.
7. Parents have a key partnership role in the Pastoral Care and wellbeing of students.
8. Student participation and voice is critical in Pastoral Care and wellbeing.
9. Pastoral Care is relevant across all domains of school life.
10. Pastoral Care promotes enhanced wellbeing across all dimensions, including spiritual, social, emotional, cognitive and physical.
11. Pastoral Care requires a comprehensive, multi-level whole-school approach on a continuum from universal to targeted needs – including primary prevention, early intervention, intervention and postvention responses and initiatives with students and families.

## Definitions:

CSO means the Catholic Schools Office of the Lismore Diocese.

Parish school community refers to all individuals who have an involvement with schools, both internal and external to the physical school environment, including students, teachers, principals, parents, family members, priests and members of the parish and wider community.

Pastoral Care refers to actions taken within a school by its leaders and community members to promote and enhance student wellbeing of a personal, spiritual social, physical, emotional or mental nature. It applies across all dimensions of Catholic education and is centered on relationships and recognition, with the key elements of caring for, respecting and valuing of persons.

Wellbeing is conceptualised as multidimensional, and experienced physically, socially, emotionally, psychologically and spiritually. Key elements of wellbeing are positive self-regard, respect for others, positive relationships, responsible behaviours and personal resilience. Approaches to wellbeing can be viewed as existing across a continuum, incorporating:

- Primary prevention approaches that promote health and wellbeing, and build a sense of belonging within the school.
- Early Intervention approaches to strengthen coping and reduce risk.
- Intervention approaches to build networks to access support and treatment.
- Postvention approaches which aim to restore positive relationships.

Procedures: Pastoral Care policy, framework, procedures and initiatives can be seen in the context of a continuum from universal support for all students, to interventions for students with high level and/or critical needs. The CSO expects all schools in the Diocese of Lismore to make provision for targeted pastoral care services and support as well as strategies that support the total wellbeing of the broader school community.

Pastoral Care Framework Schools are to develop (with the support of the CSO) their own pastoral care policy, procedures and plans, in alignment with the integrated Pastoral Care Framework developed by the CSO. The Framework is structured around a number of core components:

1. The Catholic Worldview is the integral context for Pastoral Care in Catholic schools  
2. Pastoral Care is enacted, and wellbeing enhanced, through positive relationships  
3. Pastoral Care involves a whole school approach across all domains of practice  
4. The dignity and wellbeing of the child or young person (student) is at the centre of all

policies, procedures, decisions and activities in parish schools.

The Framework is underpinned and permeated by the Principles outlined in this Pastoral Care Policy. It requires roles, responsibilities, relationships and resourcing in relation to a whole parish school approach that is effective in promoting a Christian way of life through:

- primary prevention, early intervention, intervention and postvention approaches to wellbeing
- all domains of practice – curriculum and pedagogy; partnerships and services; learning environment; and policies and procedures
- roles and responsibilities – including leadership, teachers and staff, pastoral care personnel, parents, students, support services, wider community
- staff professional learning and resourcing
- the relationship between the Catholic Schools Office and parish schools – alignment between Catholic Schools Office Strategic Plan and parish schools' Strategic and Annual Improvement Plans.

The Framework includes procedures related to a range of issues and contexts, including:

- Catholic Identity and Mission of the parish school

- Policy development and review
- Safe and supportive learning environments
- Management of critical incidents
- Risk prevention on and off school sites
- Student behaviour management
- Child protection
- Responsible technology use

The Catholic Schools Office expects every Catholic school in the Diocese of Lismore to formulate its own policy on pastoral care and related policies and procedures, in areas such as special needs provisions, student behaviour code, student behaviour management, safe school environment (anti-bullying) and critical incident management. Such policies and procedures should be consistent with the principles expressed in this policy statement and the accompanying Framework and be compliant with relevant legal requirements.

#### **Related documentation:**

- Pastoral Care Framework
- Catholic Education in the Diocese of Lismore, Foundational Values for Catholic Identity and Mission
- National Safe Schools Framework (MCEECDYA, 2011) – Australian Education Act (CTH) 2013 : Regulation 44
- The Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians (MCEETYA, 2008)
- National Framework for Health Promoting Schools (Australian Government Department of Health and Family Services, 2000).
- AITSL – Australian Professional Standard for Teachers and Australian Professional Standards for Principals (2011)
- AITSL - Australian Teacher Performance and Development Framework
- AITSL - Australian Charter for the Professional Learning of Teachers and School Leaders
- Section 5 Registration Systems and Member Non-Government Schools (NSW) Manual