

**Pastoral Care of Students in Catholic Schools**

**Rationale**
A fundamental belief for Catholic schools is that in Jesus is seen God’s image and likeness in its human expression, and that Jesus’ values and teachings show all people ‘the way, the truth and the life’ (*John* 14:6). In accordance with this belief, values to be promoted within a Catholic school’s understanding and practice of pastoral care include love, respect, compassion, tolerance, forgiveness, repentance, reconciliation and justice.

Pastoral care of students in the context of this policy refers to action taken within a school by its leaders and community members to promote and enhance student wellbeing of a personal, social, physical, emotional, mental and/or spiritual nature. Key elements of student wellbeing are positive self-regard, respect for others, positive relationships, responsible behaviours and personal resilience. These are reflected in the school’s SWPBS expectations of respect, resilience, responsibility, safety and support.

Pastoral care of students is effected in many aspects of school life, and especially in a school’s vision and mission statements, policies, procedures, programs, teaching and learning curriculum, student activities, student support and wellbeing services, behaviour management processes, family engagement, community partnerships, and school climate.

**Implementation:**

At St. Benedict's, we believe that Pastoral Care permeates all of the relationships within our school community. It draws its inspiration from the life and teachings of Jesus Christ. We are challenged to create and develop a community of faith where its members are called to respond to the call of the Gospel.

We aim to treat all students, parents and community members with respect, dignity and love. They are to be affirmed in their dignity and worth and given every opportunity to reach their full potential.

We endeavour to provide mutual support for each other in this journey and in doing so share times of burden and joy. A spirit of reconciliation, understanding and forgiveness is encouraged at all times so that we can all grow and learn.

St. Benedict's encourages its community to welcome and respect the differences between individuals. We believe that justice for all comes from a deep love and respect for the individual. Our discipline policy and our daily actions reflect this belief.

We have policies and procedures in place to address issues of bullying, harassment, child abuse and neglect. *The National Safe Schools Framework* is the appropriate model and resource by which we develop, implement and monitor these policies and procedures.

**Principles**

1. Foundational to the nature of pastoral care in Catholic schools is the belief that each person is created in the image and likeness of God (*Genesis* 1:27), with the inherent dignity that this implies, and all are created as social beings, with the mutual rights, obligations and needs that this implies.
2. Pastoral care in Catholic schools affirms and gives expression to the belief that ‘the person of each individual human being, in his or her material and spiritual needs, is at the heart of Christ’s teaching: this is why the promotion of the human person is the goal of the Catholic school.’
3. Schools exercise their pastoral responsibilities under the leadership of the Principal. Parents exercise their responsibility by providing positive support and collaborative engagement with the school in support of student and school community wellbeing.
4. Respectful and cooperative school-family relationships provide an effective channel of pastoral care for students. Schools and families share responsibility for developing and maintaining such relationships of trust, characterised by respect for the goodwill of the other and a willingness to engage collaboratively.
5. Student wellbeing is best achieved within a school environment that is safe, supportive, inclusive and empowering, where diversity is respected and valued, where human rights and the common good are honoured, where inter-relationships are positive, where students experience connectedness and engagement, and where those experiencing difficulty or special need receive particular care and support.
6. Enhanced student wellbeing contributes significantly to improved student learning outcomes as identified in the School Improvement Framework surveys. Effective pastoral care is therefore recognised as promoting the achievement of learning outcomes and thus contributing to a School Improvement Framework.
7. Effective whole-of-school approaches to pastoral care require age-appropriate behavioural education and skilling of students, and pastorally driven management of student behaviour through processes focused on both individual and community wellbeing, and on ensuring a just and reasonable balance of individual and community rights, needs and responsibilities. This is supported through the school’s ongoing implementation of SWPBS.
8. Effective school-community partnerships offer opportunities for networks of pastoral care for students. Appropriate local services and agencies may be identified, and links or partnerships developed, to support the needs of students and their families and to enhance the school’s own pastoral initiatives.

**Pastoral care for the whole school community – a Principal and Leadership Team’s responsibility**

The principal has responsibility for ensuring that pastoral care is extended to all members of the school community. As student wrongful behaviour can have an adverse effect on the wellbeing of students, staff members and others, the proper exercise of pastoral care requires the principal to ensure a just and reasonable balancing of the rights, needs, obligations and wellbeing of all concerned. In addition, the principal and leadership team will sometimes need to authorise action beyond the school’s formal student behaviour management procedures, based on knowledge of the particular issues and local realities, and guided by principles that include justice, respect, compassion, personal and communal safety, health and duty of care.

**Student behaviour management**. We seek to protect personal and school community safety, heal destructive behaviours, restore relationships, encourage reconciliation, enhance wellbeing, foster responsibility, enable personal growth, and promote the common good.

**Behaviour Management Plan**
A recommended process for addressing individual students' behaviour management needs and assisting in their growth in responsible behaviours is the Behaviour Management Plan. This is an agreement reached formally between the school, a student, and the student’s parent(s)/guardian(s), (supported by authoritative advice, if and when required, in relation to the student's medical or mental health needs) regarding future behaviour of the student and his/her management.

The following matters need to be considered and written into such a plan:

* the positive, formative purpose of the plan
* duration of the plan
* expectations regarding the student's future behaviour
* means by which the student will be supported in achieving this behaviour
* means by which the student's behaviour will be monitored and managed circumstances which could require the plan to be amended or reviewed

**Management of critical incidents**.

Procedures and policies ensure appropriate care for individuals and for the school community in times of stress, for example if there is a critical incident or a death in the school community. Support is available to school leadership personnel and school communities through the CEM. The engagement of external providers of care can be implemented when needed.

**PASTORAL CARE INITIATIVES AT ST.BENEDICT'S SCHOOL**

***Students***

At St. Benedict's we have developed a number of initiatives to foster Pastoral Care for our students:

* We follow the SWPBS framework and all students, which includes expectations, reminders and reflection sheets. Students are treated fairly and given opportunities to put forward their point of view before any action is taken.
* We have a Student Representative Council that participates in fortnightly meetings with the School Wide Positive Behaviour Support Leader where school, discipline, resourcing and social service/fund raising issues are addressed.
* School Leadership program - School, House and Sports Captains, Choir Captain, Social Justice Leaders, Digital Technologies Leaders, Environmental Leaders
* There are Parent Support Groups established by the Learning Diversity Leader to open communication between staff and parents and to support parents and their children.
* There is a buddy program established between Prep and Year 6 students and are involved in weekly cross age activities. Other classes also participate in cross-age activities at various times.
* All staff are trained to Level 2 First Aid
* Year Five/Six students run school assemblies fortnightly. Parents are encouraged to attend.
* Family groupings are used for special days such as Italian day
* We have a comfortable, supervised sickbay.
* The following policies are in place for the well being of the students at St.Benedict's such as:
	+ Sunsmart Policy
	+ Medication Policy
	+ Asthma Policy
	+ Digital Technologies Agreement

**Staff**

We believe that respect and support of staff is essential to their well being and the quality of learning and teaching in our school. There is a conscious effort by all members of the staff to participate in a happy, professional and supportive environment. The following structures are in place to foster this aim:

* Staff manual with clear expectations and requirements of the workplace.
* Staff liturgies and prayer times
* Staff ARMS and appraisal
* Catering of meals for all after hour functions
* Compassionate dealing with family or personal needs
* An awareness of overloading on teacher's time by removal of staff meetings when staff are expected attend evening meetings.
* Non smoking policy in the workplace

**Parents**

The essence to support of the parents of our school comes from good communication.

We communicate with our parents in the following ways:

* Parent Handbook (new families to the school)
* School Education Board
* Parents and Friends Association
* Semester written reports and learning portfolios sent home and two formal student/parent/teacher conversations
* An open door policy towards parents in both administration areas and classrooms
* Open invitations to attend all school functions and assemblies
* Facilitation of casserole bank for needy families as required
* Parents welcomed and valued in classrooms
* Sacramental evenings
* Emails to parents for a variety of reasons

**Community**

We are constantly challenged to broaden our activities to include the broader community. At St. Benedict's we have provided the following opportunities to achieve this aim;

* Attendance at parish Mass by one class every Wednesday
* Inclusion of Parish in Sacramental Programs
* Engaging parishioners to assist around the school
* Support of local kinders, including attendance at fairs

**Evaluation:**

This policy will be reviewed as part of the school’s four year review cycle. (March 2019)