

PASTORAL CARE & DISCIPLINE POLICY

Rationale

Pastoral Care has its source in the life of Jesus Christ. He demonstrates by his own life, what we are called to become – fully human, fully alive and able to share in the life of God.

Pastoral Care permeates the total climate of relationships within the community of the Catholic School. It has the individual as its focus, and reflects the support, the encouragement and the care shown and experiences in the ethos of Gospel-based communities.

With its life-giving focus, it should enable all to grow, to be affirmed in their dignity and worth as persons, to appreciate themselves and to develop skills in building personal relationships.

Pastoral Care involves the whole community. That is the Parish Priest, all staff, parents, children and the wider Parish Community. It is an all encompassing process.

At St John's, we believe that pastoral care involves creating a stable, secure and welcoming environment, in which the children, their families, staff and parish personnel, experience love, care and friendship. We also hope this sense of belonging will embrace the wider parish community.

Beliefs

Our community welcomes individuals to a new understanding of life. The community members give strength to one another; encourage one another to be open to the influence of Jesus Christ, to empower one another to respond to the Gospel call. It is within such an educational community, the Catholic School, through the sharing of knowledge, beliefs, values and traditions, that faith and culture are integrated.

At St John's we believe that:

- Support for staff, parents and students should be evident in the living out of the Commandment, "Love one another as I have loved you." (**Gospel Value: LOVE**)

- Children should be given the opportunity to grow, participate and develop to their fullest potential. **(Gospel Value: JUSTICE)**
- Children should be encouraged and helped to take responsibility for their actions and learning, thus building relationships of trust, confidence and friendship in a community of peace. **(Gospel Value: PEACE)**
- Children see the school as part of the wider community and they see that their role in society is of importance. **(Gospel Values: COMMUNITY & HOPE)**

Children are encouraged and taught to take responsibility for their actions and learning.

We believe that our Pastoral Care and Discipline Policy should recognise that the primary objective of education in our school is the provision of services that develop 'persons who are responsible and capable of choosing freely.'

At St John's, corporal punishment is not used.

In what ways does the Staff contribute towards building a climate of Pastoral Care at St John's?

STAFF-STAFF

- Informal support networks.
- Professional Development (Performance & Development Culture).
- Support during special times, e.g. grief, illness etc.
- Time made available for team planning.
- Sending of cards/flowers etc on personal occasions.
- Demonstration of support at school functions held after hours e.g. Sacraments, Year Six graduation
- Celebration of birthdays/special events.
- Friday afternoon drinks.
- A sense of openness and trust amongst all.
- Affirmation/team and character building.
- Shared leadership.
- Good news box.

STAFF-PARENTS

- Recognise the unique role of parents as educators.
- Foster a mutual partnership with parents in support of the student.
- Provide a welcoming atmosphere and initiate contact: parish celebrations, class programs etc.
- Keep parents informed concerning school policy and programs.
- Support families during times of stress.
- Maintain consistent communication between school and home (Parent Teacher Interviews; Parent information nights; mid and end of year reports; weekly newsletter; needs based meetings i.e. discipline; class placement; students at risk etc.
- Student Wellbeing and Student Services Program.
- Parent Support Group Meetings.
- Phone contact (where necessary).

PASTORAL CARE ROLES

PARENTS

- Develop a sense of partnership with the school.
- Support the school and its programs.
- Encourage self discipline in children whilst exercising consistent and just disciplinary measures when required.
- Form realistic expectations of their child's abilities and potential.
- Maintain a loving home environment which affirms self-worth.

PRIEST

- Spiritual and religious leadership.
- Be introduced into the school's life and organisation. E.g. through classroom visits, parent information nights, assemblies, Masses, Sacramental Program etc.
- Give encouragement and support for those engaged in the ministry of teaching.

STAFF-CHILD

- Whole staff awareness of students with special needs.
- Sensitivity, understanding of, patience with the development of individual students through activities such as Circle Time, Values Education, Masses, Program Support Group Meetings, Prayer.
- Pursue academic, sporting and artistic excellence in a spirit of compassion and co-operation, rather than competition.
- Accept, evaluate and support innovative ideas in a co-operative spirit.
- Program Support Group Meetings with parents of students with special needs.
- Personalised Learning Plans (PLPs).
- Student Wellbeing and Student Services Program.

CHILD-CHILD

- Use individual talents/ capabilities of students to contribute to the life of the community, e.g. Student Council Representatives, School Leaders,
- Take responsibility for their own learning and behaviour.
- Assume an active role in decisions, both in the classroom and on the playground.
- Respect differences-academic, physical, religious, cultural and socio-economic.
- Relate well to their peer group and demonstrate a sense of justice as they relate to others in the community.
- Recognise the role of the teacher and leaders in our community.

STAFF

- Develop organisational structures in the school which:
 - Create opportunities for staff, students and parents to be involved in collaborative decision making in the school.
 - Develop an awareness and sensitivity of cultural differences.
 - Are based on social justice and concern for the dignity of the human person.
 - Involve students in the day to day running of the school.
 - Create a respect for one another, our property and the property of the school environment.

- Build Programs to suit the needs of individual students e.g. Student Wellbeing and Student Services and PLPs.
- Support a curriculum which:
 - Values all students.
 - Is comprehensive in its processes and areas of knowledge and experience.
 - Develops responsible and individual learners.

WIDER COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

- Catholic Education Melbourne
- St Vincent de Paul Society
- Centacare
- First Friday Mass
- Transition Programs
- Lighthouse Program

CLASSROOM PROCEDURES

St John's Discipline Policy, seeks to promote a respectful, secure and healthy environment, in which all students can prosper. Disciplinary measures are formulated not as punitive actions, but as concerted attempts to foster responsibility for actions and to change and heal destructive behaviour.

The discipline practices used at St John's, therefore specifically aim to facilitate the development of self-discipline within all students. From their first day in class, students are encouraged to recognise that their fundamental freedom and rights have reciprocal responsibilities.

The school rules are:

- Honour personal space
- Speak appropriately
- Listen to the speaker
- Follow directions
- Move safely

➤ Look after property

Students who misbehave are gently, yet firmly, called to settle back to the task at hand.

1. Redirect/refocus
2. Reminder of rule
3. Verbal warning
4. Removal from group/chill out zone/reflection
5. Separated from class
6. Parents contacted

EXCURSIONS/LOSS OF PRIVILEGES

Excursions place added responsibility on teachers. Documentation prior to excursions includes preparing children by discussing the specific rules and behaviour required on this day out. These rules may include issues, such as, sitting still on the seat in the bus, polite behaviour at the theatre etc. Consistent poor behaviour may result in exclusion from an excursion.

SERIOUS OFFENCE

A serious offence by a student challenges the school to be responsive to the rights, welfare and special needs of the offender, whilst at the same time, to demonstrate a commitment to the welfare, rights and wellbeing of all members of the community. A serious offence is defined as actions or behaviours of a student which:

- Seriously undermine the ethos of the Catholic School.
- Consistently and deliberately fail to comply with any lawful direction of a teacher.
- Is offensive, or dangerous to the physical or emotional health of any student or staff member.
- Consistently and deliberately interferes with the educational opportunities of others.
- Is offensive, in that the child seriously damages the property of another child, or the property of the school.

Serious offences will be dealt with by relevant staff under the direction of the principal following the recommended procedures listed below of Catholic Education Melbourne:

Recommended Procedures (Catholic Education Melbourne)

Student Wrongful Behaviour of a Serious Nature

Some wrongful behaviours of a serious nature are by definition *criminal offences*. These may include criminal damage of property, possession of a weapon, theft, assault, assault with weapons, use, possession or distribution of drugs, sexual assault. This list is indicative only and not all-inclusive. When a principal determines that a serious offence of a criminal nature has occurred, the welfare needs of the offending student(s) is paramount. The incident should be reported to the police at the earliest opportunity.

When it is judged by the school that a student has engaged in wrongful behaviour of a serious nature within the school community, it is recommended that a **Positive Behaviour Management Support Group** be set up to:

- consider the behaviour of the student and the implications for the student and the school community
- consider the personal and social needs of the student, and how they may best be responded to
- determine what behaviour management action within the school's stated processes is most appropriate
- identify strategies to assist the student, following successful behaviour management, to re-establish his/her place satisfactorily in the school community
- ensure that decisions of the Behaviour Management Support Group are implemented
- access any relevant agencies to provide support.

In arriving at decisions, the Positive Behaviour Management Support Group aims for consensus. Where this is not achievable, the principal (or principal's nominee) makes the decision, in accordance with school policies and directives. The decision of the Positive Behaviour Management Support Group is recorded in writing and filed in the school records. Confidentiality should be honoured at all times.

Membership of the Positive Behaviour Support Group will consist of:

- the principal or his/her nominee as convenor and chairperson
- the student, who may be accompanied by a support person (not acting for fee or reward) nominated by the student
- the parent(s) or guardian(s) of the student, who may be accompanied by a support person (not acting for fee or reward) nominated by the parent(s)/guardian(s)

- class teacher (primary) or the teacher nominated as having responsibility for the student (e.g. year level co-ordinator, secondary)
- a specialist person (as required) who may be of assistance, for example, the student wellbeing leader, the parish priest or relevant team member from Catholic Education Eastern Region Office

In some instances, where the behaviour of a student is deemed to threaten immediate or ongoing harm, distress or danger to others, it may be necessary to withdraw or suspend the student temporarily from the student community, pending a meeting of the Positive Behaviour Management Support Group. Responsibility for such a decision rests with the principal or the principal's nominee.

In-school Withdrawal

Withdrawal from class and/or other school activities, if judged necessary as a behaviour management process, is best done in-school rather than out-of-school, as this maintains a student's connectedness and engagement with the school. It is recommended that school processes for the withdrawal of the student from some aspect(s) of the school program are structured positively to assist in the student's return to acceptable behaviours. An example is the provision of time, in an appropriate and supervised setting, for the student to reflect upon their behaviours and attitudes, the impact of these on themselves and others, reasons for preferring acceptable behaviours, and ways to find encouragement and assistance to achieve this goal. An allocated task in keeping with such a purpose is recommended.

Out-of-school Suspension

If out-of-school suspension is judged appropriate by the school, it is recommended that it be for the shortest time necessary. At least one day prior to the day on which the suspension is to commence, the school ought notify the student's parent(s)/guardian(s), if possible by verbal communication initially and by confirmation in writing. The communication ought to include the reason for the suspension, the purpose of the suspension, and the date(s) on which the suspension will occur.

The parent(s)/guardian(s) will be offered the opportunity to participate in a meeting to consider these and other related matters, including:

- the legal and pastoral responsibilities of the parent(s)/guardian(s) during the time of suspension
- the school's responsibility for providing learning material during the time of suspension

- the process of settling back into the school environment, and how this is to be facilitated
- arrangements for monitoring the student's progress following his/her return to school.

If an initial verbal contact with the parent(s)/guardian(s) is not possible, it may be necessary to ask the student to take the written notice home to them as their first notification. This decision rests with the school authority, taking into account the age of the student, legal requirements, duty of care, and other relevant circumstances.

St John the Baptist Parish School will work within the expectation of Catholic Education Melbourne whereby they state that a student shall not be suspended for a total of more than nine school days in any one school year.

Negotiated Transfer

Negotiated Transfer involves a change of school by a student either between Catholic schools, or to a school within another sector, or to an alternative educational setting. In the case of students who are of post-compulsory school age, a wider range of options might be considered, for example, a negotiated transfer, either temporary or permanent, to the workforce, or to a higher education or training institute.

Negotiated Transfer is an option in circumstances in which it is judged that the student's present school is not the right environment for the student, and that another setting would more suitably meet the student's current and future needs and be the most appropriate means of providing for the student's wellbeing. It may also be that, due to serious behavioural issues, a student's Negotiated Transfer is an appropriate means of providing for the wellbeing of the school community.

When Negotiated Transfer is being offered, the principal (or principal's nominee) ought provide comprehensive advice to the student and the student's parents about the benefits this option would provide, and seek their agreement for a Negotiated Transfer.

Responsibility for negotiating a transfer is with the principal (or principal's nominee) of the school from which the student is to transfer. The following matters need to be considered:

- the environment which would best provide for the student's emotional, social and spiritual needs

- the school which would provide an educational program suitable to the student's needs, abilities and aspirations
- the process by which the transfer is to be negotiated
- the support required by the student and parent(s)/guardian(s) in making the transition.

These and other relevant matters will be included in the formal record of Negotiated Transfer. If a Negotiated Transfer is desired but cannot be arranged, the Executive Director of Catholic Education Melbourne will be informed in writing, and assistance requested. If a Negotiated Transfer is still unable to be achieved, the student will remain enrolled at our school, unless the circumstances are such as to require expulsion.

Expulsion

St John the Baptist Parish school understands and supports the of Catholic Education Melbourne that expulsion of a student from a Catholic school in the Archdiocese of Melbourne will not occur except in the most serious of circumstances, and when the following conditions all apply:

- the student has engaged in wrongful behaviour of a serious nature (see definition above), and
- our school's other processes for addressing such behaviours have been applied and not been successful, and
- the welfare and safety of others in the school community, or the need to maintain order and protect the rights of others, make it necessary that the student no longer be present in our school community.

Only the principal has the authority to expel a student. Catholic Education Melbourne expects that, prior to confirming an expulsion, the principal will:

- explain clearly to the student and the student's parent(s)/guardian(s) the reason(s) for the intended expulsion, and provide them with an opportunity to speak on behalf of the student
- provide to the parish priest as appropriate, formal written notification of the intended expulsion and the reasons for it and seek endorsement. In addition, provide to the Executive Director of Catholic Education Melbourne formal written notification of the intended expulsion, and the reasons for it, and request that the Executive Director endorse the principal's decision

Should the decision to expel the student be confirmed, the principal must ensure that the expulsion is formally recorded in the school's files, and provide to the parent(s)/guardian(s)

of the expelled student a formal Notice of Expulsion. When possible, this notice is to be issued before or on the day the expulsion is to commence, and if that is not possible then as soon after that as possible. This notice needs to include:

- The reason(s) for the expulsion
- The commencement date of the expulsion
- Details of the Review and/or Appeal processes available*

*Natural justice must apply, and consequently there will be available at St John the Baptist a formally authorised process by which parent(s)/guardian(s) of an expelled student, and in some circumstances the expelled student himself/herself, may have the expulsion decision reviewed and/or appealed.

Process for Review of an Expulsion Decision

The parent(s)/guardian(s) of a student expelled from St John the Baptist may, within five school days (in exceptional circumstances, ten school days) of receipt of the notice of expulsion, formally request of the principal that the decision be reviewed. The request must be in writing unless that is not possible, and must state the grounds on which the Review is being sought, whether the student and parent(s)/guardian(s) wish to be heard in person, and if they wish to be accompanied at the Review by another person – such a person to be named, and not acting for fee or reward.

Valid grounds for requesting a Review are that:

- proper procedures were not followed by the school in matters related to the expulsion decision, and/or that
- the full details of the case were not considered at the time (additional details to be provided), and/or that
- the decision was too severe, and/or that
- the decision was unjust.

An Expulsion Review Panel, convened by the principal, will hold the review, within five school days if possible. Membership of the panel will be the principal as non-voting chair and three persons nominated by the principal, who were not involved in the original decision and who have school leadership responsibility. The panel will consider the details of the case and, after giving the student and parent(s)/guardian(s) the opportunity to be heard on the grounds of review, determine by majority vote a recommendation to the principal as to whether the expulsion should remain or be repealed.

Having considered the recommendation, the principal will make a decision, and within three school days will formally notify this decision to the person(s) who requested the review, to the Executive Director of Catholic Education and, the Parish Priest.

Process for Appeal against an Expulsion Review Decision

After the Review Process has been concluded, if the expulsion decision is still in place the parent(s)/guardian(s) may appeal against that decision. The parent(s)/guardian(s) may, within five school days (in exceptional circumstances, ten school days) of receipt of the Review decision, lodge a formal Appeal.

Valid grounds for requesting an Appeal are that

- proper procedures were not followed in the Review process, and/or that
- the decision to continue the expulsion was unjust.

The Appeal must be in writing to the Executive Director of Catholic Education or, the Parish Priest. Upon receipt of an Appeal notice, this authority will appoint an officer to investigate the Appeal. When the investigation has been completed, the Officer will deliver their findings to the Executive Director of Catholic Education and the Parish Priest, who will formally notify the principal and the person(s) who made the Appeal. If the grounds on which the Appeal was made are found to be true, the expulsion must be repealed. Otherwise, the expulsion will remain.

Following receipt of these findings, the principal will formally notify all parties to the Appeal as to whether the expulsion decision remains or is repealed, and the reason(s) for the decision. This decision will be final, and is not subject to further Review or Appeal within the Catholic Education system.

References and Notes

The *Health Promoting Schools Framework*, 1996, was developed by the National Health and Medical Research Council. The Framework has subsequently become the foundational document upon which the MindMatters National Mental Health in Schools Project has been based.

Evaluation

This policy will be reviewed as part of the school's four-year review cycle.