

SOUTH AUSTRALIAN COMMISSION FOR CATHOLIC SCHOOLS STUDENT INCLUSION AND DIVERSITY POLICY (DRAFT)

1. Purpose

The Student Inclusion and Diversity Policy presents the commitment of Catholic Education South Australia, as a system of diocesan and separately governed Catholic schools, together with Catholic Education Offices, to the inclusion and diversity of students.

The Student Inclusion and Diversity Policy is founded on the belief that every human person, made in the image and likeness of God, is equal in worth and dignity along with every other human person.

The Student Inclusion and Diversity Policy is informed and guided by the gospel of Jesus Christ, who came 'that they may have life, and have it to the full'.

The Student Inclusion and Diversity Policy is integral to the mission of the Church and of Catholic Education South Australia. As Ecclesia in Oceania (2001 n33) affirms, a *distinguishing feature of Catholic education is that it is open to all.*

The Policy focuses on student inclusion. It embraces the United Nations definition of inclusion as:

A process of systemic reform embodying changes and modifications in content, teaching methods, approaches, structures and strategies in education to overcome barriers with a vision serving to provide all students of the relevant age range with an equitable and participatory learning experience and environment that best corresponds to their requirements and preferences.

The Policy focuses on student diversity. It embraces the commitment of the Education Council (all Australian Education Ministers) in the Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration to:

- *provide all young Australians with access to high-quality education that is inclusive and free from any form of discrimination;*
- *recognise the individual needs of all young Australians, identify barriers that can be addressed, and empower learners to overcome barriers;*
- *promote personalised learning and provide support that aims to fulfil the individual capabilities and needs of learners;*
- *ensure that young Australians of all backgrounds are supported to achieve their full educational potential;*
- *ensure that education promotes and contributes to a socially cohesive society that values, respects and appreciates different points of view and cultural, social, linguistic and religious diversity;*
- *promote a culture of excellence in all learning environments, by providing varied, challenging, and stimulating learning experiences and opportunities that enable all learners to explore and build on their individual abilities, interests, and experiences.*

2. Governance

The South Australian Commission for Catholic Schools (SACCS) is the Approval Authority for the Student Inclusion and Diversity Policy.

SACCS recognises the longstanding, collaborative partnership with Religious Institute/Public Juridic Person entities that has over time provided rich and diverse offerings for all students in South Australian Catholic schools.

This policy articulates the shared commitment to Inclusion and Diversity of all diocesan and separately governed Catholic schools and Catholic Education Offices in South Australia.

3. Policy Overview

The Student Inclusion and Diversity Policy comprises the following components. The interrelationship between the components is presented in the following diagram.



4. Our Vision

In Catholic Education South Australia each child and young person is welcomed as having inestimable value. To be welcomed, each child and young person has access to places, spaces, and approaches to be a thriving person, capable learner and leader for the world God desires.

5. Guiding Principles

The Student Inclusion and Diversity Policy is underpinned by the following principles:

- a) the uniqueness and dignity of each student, with the understanding that each child and young person is made in the image of God;
- b) the right of parents, as the first educators of their children in human values and the Christian faith, to choose the education suitable for their children;
- c) respectful relationships within a supportive Christian community;
- d) the intellectual, spiritual, cultural, social, emotional, and physical development of each student;
- e) learning for each student that is formative, challenging, engaging, life-long, and life-wide;
- f) learning for each student that is high quality and responsive to their individual needs;
- g) a whole-of-system approach to learning, wellbeing, and inclusion;
- h) educational practices informed by the principles of Christian anthropology, Catholic social teaching, evidence and research, legislative requirements, and societal expectations; and
- i) funding and fee arrangements that provide a quality education which is accessible to parents and families from diverse religious, social, cultural, and economic backgrounds.

6. Policy Statement

The Policy is based on six interdependent strands that define Catholic Education's commitment to student inclusion and diversity:

- culture of inclusion;
- student agency;
- partnership with parents, carers, and families;
- focus on learning and wellbeing;
- leaders and staff focus on each student; and
- services for student learning, wellbeing and inclusion.

1) Culture of inclusion

- a) Each student in Catholic Education is welcomed, valued and respected.
- b) Catholic schools and offices use procedures and practices to develop a positive culture of inclusion and to value difference and diversity, including processes to address bullying and harassment, and discrimination based on race, religious beliefs, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, or disability.
- c) Catholic schools and offices put strategies, procedures and guidelines in place that build respectful relationships between students, between staff and students, and between schools and parents/carers/families.
- d) Catholic schools and offices work in partnership with parents/carers/families to identify the most effective place, spaces, and approaches for each child's learning and wellbeing.

- e) Each Catholic school's culture is based on quality pastoral care, where each student builds positive and respectful relationships with their peers, leaders, teachers, and other staff.
- f) Catholic schools and offices use funding and fee arrangements to provide quality education at an affordable cost to disadvantaged and vulnerable families.
- g) *Other points may be added following consultation on the draft Policy.*

2) Student agency

- a) Students form and build healthy relationships with their peers.
- b) Students actively develop their understanding and respect for differences in others.
- c) Students are given a voice, using different communication methods, to increase their participation and inclusion in school life.
- d) Students participate in setting goals, making decisions and self-advocating about their learning and wellbeing.
- e) Students provide feedback that is used by teachers to improve their learning and wellbeing.
- f) School leaders and teachers understand, and respond to, student behaviour as a form of expression and communication about themselves.
- g) *Other points may be added following consultation on the draft Policy.*

3) Partnership with parents, carers, and families

- a) School leaders and teachers recognise the partnership and two-way communication with parents/carers/families as fundamental to student learning, wellbeing, and a positive schooling experience.
- b) School leaders and teachers give parents/carers/families opportunities to provide insight into how their child can achieve the best outcomes in their learning and wellbeing.
- c) School leaders and teachers work in partnership with parents/carers/families to identify where adjustments are needed for their child's learning, wellbeing and inclusion.
- d) Parents/carers/families are provided with timely and relevant information about the learning experiences of their child.
- e) *Other points may be added following consultation on the draft Policy.*

4) Focus on learning and wellbeing

- a) Each student has the place, spaces and approaches that most effectively match their learning and wellbeing needs.
- a) Each school's approaches to learning and wellbeing assists each student to be a thriving person, capable learner and leader for the world God desires.
- b) Each school's approaches to learning and wellbeing enable students to be resilient, to think critically, and to strive for personal excellence.

- c) Each school provides reasonable adjustments for students who require them, supported by access to appropriate resources, so they can access and participate in education on the same basis as other students.
- d) School leaders and teachers use evidence-based practices that address the learning and wellbeing needs of the diverse range of students in their school.
- e) School leaders and teachers monitor the progress of individual students to focus on their strengths and to address areas for improvement where needed.
- f) Catholic schools and offices work in partnership with external professionals and organisations with expertise in meeting the learning and wellbeing needs of students.
- g) Catholic schools and offices use resources to best address the learning and wellbeing needs of the diverse range of students.
- h) *Other points may be added following consultation on the draft Policy.*

5) Leaders and staff focus on each student

- a) Principals, together with other school leaders, are leaders of learning and wellbeing for their school community and ensure the culture, policies and educational practices of their school are inclusive of each student.
- b) All staff in schools use approaches which are inclusive of the diverse range of students and which improve the learning and wellbeing of each student.
- c) All staff in the Catholic system of schools and offices ensure policies, strategies and resources are directed to improving the learning, wellbeing and inclusion of each student.
- d) Staff in schools and offices use a wraparound approach for students who require a personalised plan, which engages a team around the student, including their family, multidisciplinary services, and community agencies, who work together to plan, improve and evaluate the student's progress.
- e) *Other points may be added following consultation on the draft Policy.*

6) Services for student learning, wellbeing and inclusion

- a) Quality assurance: Catholic education as system uses quality management processes to improve the learning, wellbeing and inclusion of students.
- b) Information and data: Catholic education as a system uses information and data to monitor, analyse and improve the learning, wellbeing and inclusion of students.
- c) Infrastructure: Catholic education as a system provides the places and spaces for students to be successful in their learning and wellbeing, including provisions that recognise the diversity of students.
- d) Funding: Catholic education as a system ensures that funding is directed, and is used, to support the learning and wellbeing of students, particularly where funding is allocated to recognise and address the diversity of students.
- e) *Other points may be added following consultation on the draft Policy.*

7. Roles and responsibilities

All staff employed in Catholic Education South Australia, as a system of diocesan and separately governed Catholic schools and offices, are bound by the SACCS Student Inclusion and Diversity Policy.

School Principals, together with other school leaders, are responsible for ensuring the culture, policies, and educational practices of their school are inclusive of each student.

Leaders in Catholic Education Offices are responsible for ensuring the policies, strategies, and resources of the Catholic system of schools maximise the inclusion of each student.

Parents, carers and families are responsible for working in partnership with school leaders, teachers and staff to identify the most effective place, spaces and approaches which address the learning and wellbeing needs of their child and which ensure their successful inclusion.

8. References

The Student Inclusion and Diversity Policy builds on the following CESA documents:

- Building a new way of working for CESA: a *Blueprint for Step Change* (2020)
- Living, Learning, Leading Framework (2020)
- Strategy for Leading Catholic Education into New Levels of Excellence (2015)
- Students with Disability Review Report to SACCS (2020)

The Student Inclusion and Diversity Policy also draws from other sources that focus on student inclusion and diversity, in particular:

- *Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians*, Australian Education Council (2019)
- *Education Brief on Inclusive Education*, Cambridge Assessment International Education (2020)
- *Funding Principles for Catholic Schools*, National Catholic Education Commission (2015)
- *Inclusive Education Statement for students with disability*, NSW Education Department (2021)
- *Position Statement: Inclusive practices for students in Queensland Catholic schools*, Queensland Catholic Education Commission (2019)
- *Report on Article 24*, United Nations (2016).

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