Religious Education

Guidelines for the Religious Life of the School
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Dear Principals and Assistants to the Principal - Religious Education,

One of the most pleasing aspects of our Archdiocesan community is the manner in which the vision of our 2003 Archdiocesan Synod has been embraced, especially by those of you in leadership in our Catholic and three Ecumenical schools.

The vision of Jesus Communion Mission is readily seen and experienced. But there is more to be done.

These Guidelines for the Religious Life of the School have a parallel authority to the 1997 Syllabus for Religious Education in Catholic Schools. They both carry my imprimatur.

I wrote in my letter in the 1997 Archdiocesan Syllabus for Religious Education in Catholic Schools that:

The Syllabus is one tool for assisting the development of students. I take this opportunity to remind school communities to reflect upon other areas of learning, to reflect upon the quality of interpersonal relationships, to reflect upon the opportunities for and the quality of prayer in the school, to reflect upon the challenge that we offer to students so that they become people of justice and deep spirituality, and finally to reflect upon what they share in common with Christians from other traditions.

The Guidelines for the Religious Life of the School and the Syllabus for Religious Education in Catholic Schools together form the authorised sources for Religious Education in the Archdiocese. Collectively they assist our staff, students and their parents to be further exposed to and embrace our Jesus Communion Mission vision.

I am delighted by the manner in which, since 1997, schools have implemented the Religious Education Guidelines. I acknowledge the work of the Religious Education Team in supporting this implementation.

I commend this documentation to you for your implementation.

Please be assured of my support and prayers as we journey together in making the mystery of God’s love and the gospel of Jesus Christ relevant to the young people we serve. Having just returned from the privilege of attending the Lambeth Conference in England, I was amazed at the freedom of Anglicans when speaking of Jesus as a close friend. I’m sure that many of our principals, teachers and students rejoice in that same freedom.

With every best wish and blessing for your work in the ministry of Catholic Education in the Archdiocese.

Your brother in Christ,

John A Bathersby
Archbishop of Brisbane

August 2008
Since 1997 resourcing for religious education in the Archdiocese of Brisbane has focused primarily on the classroom teaching of religion. The introductory section of these Guidelines for the Religious Life of the School reference the source documents that have been developed since 1997 to support this focus. Those source documents support the educational orientation and religious literacy aim of the classroom teaching of religion.

This present source document, Guidelines for the Religious Life of the School, provides for schools a comprehensive way of dealing with the complementary dimension of religious education, namely the religious life of the school. Its four components, Religious Identity and Culture, Evangelisation and Faith Formation, Prayer and Worship, Social Action and Justice, orientate schools towards the faith formation of students.

These Guidelines for the Religious Life of the School are authoritative. They are promulgated by the Archbishop for use in all Catholic schools and the Ecumenical schools in the Archdiocese directly supported by Brisbane Catholic Education. These Guidelines have the same status as the Religious Education Syllabus for Catholic Schools (1997).

I wish to acknowledge those involved in the development of this document, particularly the members of the Religious Education Team. I thank principals, APREs, campus ministers, clergy and all others who provided responses to the consultation process. The consultative process has enhanced this document.

My hope is that these new Guidelines will provide further support to the implementation of the Vision Statement for Catholic Education in the Archdiocese, to teach, challenge and transform. They will assist schools to live out their religious identity and culture, promote evangelisation and faith formation, encourage active participation in prayer and worship, and engage with social action and justice.

David J Hutton
Executive Director of Catholic Education
Archdiocese of Brisbane

August 2008
Introduction

Status of Guidelines for the Religious Life of the School

The Guidelines for the Religious Life of the School take their place among a suite of documents that together constitute the authorised Guidelines for Religious Education in the Archdiocese of Brisbane. Earlier Guidelines documents focus on that dimension of Religious Education concerned with teaching people religion, sometimes referred to as religious instruction or the classroom teaching of religion. These Guidelines for the Religious Life of the School focus on the other dimension of Religious Education concerned with teaching people to be religious, focusing on the development of faith through opportunities for faith growth in the religious life of the school community. The complete Religious Education Guidelines, authorised by the Archbishop of Brisbane, now consist of the following:

- A Statement on Religious Education for Catholic Schools (1997)
- A Syllabus for Religious Education for Catholic schools (1997)
- Religious Education Curriculum Guidelines for the Early Years (2007)

The Guidelines for the Religious Life of the School carry the Imprimatur of the Archbishop as does the Syllabus for Religious Education for Catholic Schools. These two documents together form the authoritative source documents authorised by the Archbishop for Religious Education within the Archdiocese. This is outlined further in Section One.

The Purpose of this Document

The Guidelines for the Religious Life of the School (RLOS) will assist school communities in the Archdiocese in the development of faith of their members by providing a lens through which their religious life may be viewed and developed.

In Catholic thinking, any genuine education must address the religious dimension of life, nurture human spiritual yearning and assist young people to understand themselves in the light of the transcendent. (Archdiocese of Brisbane Catholic Education Council (2005) Religious Education of School-Aged Catholics Policy)

These Guidelines will assist school communities to engage in practical ways in implementing the Vision Statement for Catholic Education in the Archdiocese of Brisbane, particularly its call to Teach, Challenge and Transform (see Appendix 2). The transformational focus of this Vision, embracing as it does the Archdiocesan Vision of Jesus Communion Mission, calls schools to provide learning opportunities that build Christian community in which the Gospel and the work of the Church are experienced as alive and tangible by members of the school community.

The Archdiocesan Vision of Jesus Communion Mission emanated from the Archdiocesan Synod held in 2003. The outcomes of the Synod provide the pastoral directions for the Archdiocese through its deaneries, parishes, groups, movements and agencies including Catholic schools.

These Guidelines for the Religious Life of the School assist schools to link with and implement the Synod pastoral directions, particularly the following priority from Let Your Light Shine, the document which sets out the vision, priorities, common spirituality, planning approach and review steps of the Archdiocese in the active pursuit of its mission:

That young people are helped by a set of faith development opportunities to integrate their faith with everyday experience.
Reaching out to young people must be a priority of the Church. The greatest gift we can give to young people is the correct understanding of the person and vision of Christ, filled with the excitement that accompanies it.

The Guidelines for the Religious Life of the School provide direction and assistance for schools in developing and enhancing their religious life. The document is an important resource for internal and external school renewal processes and for the spiritual formation of students and others in the schools of the Archdiocese.

Content

This document contains two sections and appendices.

Section One contains background information and orientates the reader. It also provides a brief analysis of the contexts in which contemporary Catholic schools operate.

Section Two presents four Components for understanding the religious life of Catholic schools in the Archdiocese of Brisbane: Religious Identity and Culture; Evangelisation and Faith Formation; Prayer and Worship; Social Action and Justice. Each component provides a significant focus on a distinctive aspect of the religious life of the school. While each component is distinctive, the Components are interrelated and complementary. Each Component has three Elements which assist school communities to unpack and reflect upon their religious life and the faith formation opportunities which they provide. This section also offers examples or suggestions for implementing the four Components. These examples can be used by school communities as they review their religious life and plan for renewal. These materials can be used selectively in ways that are responsive to the needs and context of the school at a given time. They are not a check list.

The appendices provide a number of foundational documents that inform the religious life of the school; a listing of references; and a glossary of terms used throughout the document.

Supporting Resources

The Guidelines for the Religious Life of the School are authorised by the Archbishop and carry his Imprimatur. They provide direction, guidance, support and leadership to schools in the development and renewal of their religious life. These Guidelines are complemented by additional support resources. These resources will be developed on an ongoing basis through the Religious Education Team in Brisbane Catholic Education.
Section One – Background

Religious Education in the Contemporary Catholic School

Religious Education in the contemporary Catholic School comprises two distinct but complementary dimensions – teaching people religion and teaching people to be religious. Teaching people religion is an educational activity focused on the teaching and learning of religion and utilising a range of learning processes and resources. In a school, teaching religion occurs in a classroom setting or other structured learning environments. The aim of teaching religion to students in a school is to assist them in developing their religious literacy so that they may be better able to participate in a critical and effective way in the life of their own faith communities and in the wider society. (Refer Syllabus, p18)

Teaching people to be religious is identified with the religious life of the school and is a faith development activity focused on nurturing the religious, spiritual and faith growth of students. These Guidelines provide four Components for the faith development of students in the religious life of a school: Religious Identity and Culture, Evangelisation and Faith Formation, Prayer and Worship and Social Action and Justice. Beyond the school, the family, parish and local community also nourish and develop the faith of students.

The diagram below indicates the distinctiveness of each of the two dimensions of Religious Education. At the same time the diagram shows that the two dimensions are complementary and interrelated. This means that the connections and mutual reinforcement between classroom learning and teaching and the religious life of the school are recognised. Thus, Catholic schools draw upon knowledge and skills gained from the learning and teaching of religion and also from learning and teaching in other areas of the curriculum, particularly the arts, the humanities and the social sciences.

In a Catholic school, teaching people religion and teaching people to be religious draw upon the Catholic Christian tradition in ways that are sensitive to local context and the ecumenical and multi-faith realities of our world. School communities seek to understand and utilise the distinctiveness of these two dimensions of religious education in the holistic education and formation of students.

To varying extents, the ecumenical and religious diversity of our world is reflected in the community of the school itself. School programs, activities and experiences for teaching students religion and for teaching students to be religious are responsive to religious diversity within the school and within society while being faithful to the Catholic Christian identity of the school.
Contexts for the Religious Life of the School

Contemporary social, ecclesial and educational contexts impact upon the religious life of schools in many ways. School communities may experience these contexts as having a positive or negative impact upon their religious life. This section discusses some of the characteristics of these contexts and the challenges they entail in developing the religious life of a school in faithful and responsive ways.

Societal context

Contemporary students are immersed in a global world. From an early age they are exposed to a range of values presented through a variety of media. They have some awareness of the diverse cultures, religions and belief systems of the world. In this context, the Catholic Christian tradition may be seen as one option among many. Students in Catholic schools are part of the broader Australian culture that provides tolerance of and legal protection for a range of religious beliefs and practices. While the contribution of religious groups in addressing social disadvantage and promoting social welfare is recognised and respected, many Australians are wary of and indifferent to the relevance of beliefs and practices of religion in their daily life.

Students grow up in a relatively affluent and consumerist society that provides many opportunities for personal growth and development. An increasing number are skilled in their use of electronic and digital resources regularly using the internet and mobile phones as preferred means of communication. This enables them to engage in new experiences of belonging and have access to a world of ideas and knowledge literally at their fingertips. All of this creates new forms of language and expression with associated cultures and sub-cultures, imagery and rituals. This provides opportunities and challenges to school communities as they seek new ways of promoting the religious development and spiritual formation of students.

Catholic schools embrace families from a wide range of socio-economic and cultural backgrounds. Parents enrol their children in Catholic schools for a variety of reasons. Clearly, while many parents want their children to experience Catholic values and traditions, some do not support fully the foundational nature and central importance of the religious and spiritual dimension of Catholic education. As a consequence, schools are continuously challenged to engage families in the religious life of the school in rich and relevant ways.

In this way the Catholic school’s public role is clearly perceived. It has not come into being as a private initiative, but as an expression of the reality of the Church, having by its nature a public character. It fulfils a service of public usefulness…decidedly configured in the perspective of the Catholic faith… (The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium, 16)
**Ecclesial context**

Research on religious life in Australia commissioned by the Australian Bishops Conference (*Putting Life Together, 2007*) confirms the experience of many teachers and school leaders about the religious engagement of students and their families. An increasing number of students and their families are less engaged with the formal life of the Church than was the case in the past. Consequently, in many students, the culture and language of formal religion is underdeveloped. Australians tend to have a hesitant and inarticulate approach to matters of religion and spirituality and do not readily speak about or publicly proclaim their religious beliefs and spiritual values. This hesitancy and reluctance to speak about religious matters can lead to perceptions that many are uninterested in religious matters but this is not necessarily the case. Nor should lack of involvement in the formal life of the Church necessarily be equated with disinterest in religious and spiritual matters. As an integral expression of Church, schools have the opportunity to support students and their families in connecting with the Catholic Christian tradition and its spiritual richness providing a forum in which this tradition and its spiritual riches can be experienced and explored.

Catholic schools increasingly provide the introductory and developmental understanding and experience of Church for students and their families. This is supported when the school is a place where students and their families genuinely experience the mission and outreach of the Church, especially through pastoral care and experience of Catholic Christian community.

> It is from its Catholic identity that the school derives its original characteristics and its ‘structure’ as a genuine place of real and specific pastoral ministry. The Catholic school participates in the evangelising mission of the Church and is a privileged environment in which Christian education is carried out. (*The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium, 11*)

**Educational context**

The Catholic Christian school is primarily a place for learning and teaching where students utilise opportunities to mature as educated citizens, to develop their academic, artistic, sporting and cultural pursuits, in the light of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Education in a Catholic school seeks transformation of the whole person so that those in the school community are empowered to shape and enrich our world by living the Gospel of Jesus Christ in their everyday lives. In a Catholic Christian school education is a work of love and service. Schools nurture and develop the faith of individuals in ways that are sensitive to their cultural and religious identity.

The scope of education has broadened and become increasingly complex. Rapid and constant social change requires the development of fresh educational frameworks and approaches and the building of new capacities to meet the demands of the present and the future. Educators are constantly challenged to respond to the realities that face them in the light of their evangelising mission to live and proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ. In short, the Catholic school is called to integrate faith and culture, faith and life.

Catholic schools seek to be counter-cultural, challenging negative societal influences that impact upon the spiritual wellbeing of their students, such as excessive individualism, moral relativism and consumerism. In doing so, educators also draw upon positive social values such as care for the environment, justice and peace, outreach to the poor and the marginalised and community service in their mission of evangelisation.

> In the Catholic school’s educational project there is no separation between time for learning and time for formation, between acquiring notions and growing in wisdom. (*The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium, 14*)
Section Two – Components of the Religious Life of the School

Four Components of the Religious Life of the School

This document presents four components for the religious life of the school: Religious Identity and Culture; Evangelisation and Faith Formation; Prayer and Worship; and Social Action and Justice. Each component, while being interrelated and mutually reinforcing, provides a significant focus on a distinctive aspect of the religious life of the school.

Each component is further sub-divided into three elements as in the diagram below.
RELIGIOUS IDENTITY AND CULTURE

From the first moment that a student sets foot in a Catholic school, he or she ought to have the impression of entering a new environment, one illumined by the light of faith, and having its own unique characteristics. The inspiration of Jesus must be translated from the ideal into the real. The Gospel spirit should be evident in a Christian way of thought and life which permeates all facets of the educational climate. (Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School, 25)

Jesus Christ is central to understanding Christianity. Catholic schools introduce students to a view of the world founded on scripture and the ongoing tradition of the Church and embedded in the religious identity and culture of the school. This world view is expressed through its beliefs, values and practices, its building of relationships, its aesthetic, social and physical environment and its organisational structures and procedures. These expressions are shaped and developed in such a way as to maximise their positive impact upon the religious and spiritual formation of all members in the school community. Knowledge and skills of staff and students in dance, drama, media, music and visual arts are utilised to effectively communicate and promote elements of the religious identity and culture of the school.

The school derives its identity and culture from its Catholic Christian character. The school is called to be a real and living expression of the Church’s pastoral mission in the world.

The complexity of the modern world makes it all the more necessary to increase awareness of the ecclesial identity of the Catholic school. It is from its Catholic identity that the school derives its original characteristics and its ‘structure’ as a genuine instrument of the Church, a place of real and specific pastoral ministry. (The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium, 11)

Thus, a true test of the school’s authentic identity and culture is the extent to which the Church is present in the school and the school is present in the Church.

Secondly, the curriculum (i.e. all the activities and experiences that promote students’ learning and development as whole persons) is also an expression of the school’s religious identity and culture. This is especially so in the ways in which areas of learning are presented and programmed, classroom pedagogy is experienced, student engagement in learning is promoted, assessment and reporting processes occur and pastoral care strategies assist student well-being. Such things make a statement about what is important and valued in a particular community, as do those things which are excluded from the formal curriculum program and those things which are part of the extra-curricula activities.

A Catholic perspective can be infused into to all areas of learning to promote a school identity which is informed by the Catholic intellectual and aesthetic traditions. For example: aspects of Catholic Social Teaching make an important contribution to studies of business and economics; Catholic poets and writers can assist the study of literature; hymns and religious music can assist studies in music and performance; the sciences are informed by scripture and Church teaching particularly in areas such as bioethics and the origins of the universe. Thus, all areas of learning contribute to the religious identity and culture of the school. It cannot be left to the classroom religion program to be the sole formal learning area that contributes to the school’s religious identity and culture.

Three elements of the religious identity and culture are:

- ethos and charism
- authentic Christian community
- sense of the sacred.
Ethos and Charism

The ethos and charism of the school express the assumptions, beliefs and values that the Catholic community shares. They are reflected in what is done, how it is done and who is doing it. A school communicates its distinctive identity through its ethos and charism which find expression in its religious values, culture, rituals and practices.

Christ is the foundation of the whole educational enterprise in a Catholic school. The fact that in their own individual ways all members of the school community share this Christian vision, makes the school “Catholic”; principles of the Gospel in this manner become the educational norms since the school then has them as its internal motivation and final goal. (The Catholic School, 34)

In a Catholic Christian educational context, ethos refers to the gospel values and Church traditions embedded in the everyday life and culture of the school. The school’s ethos is given voice through the educational and faith formation of its students, the quality of personal relationships fostered and Christian attitudes and responsibilities modelled and explicitly taught. The embedding of this ethos needs to take into account a range of factors: the ecclesial, political, economic, social and historical contexts; the nature of the local community; the parents, teachers and students of the school community; and the interrelationships between these different factors. A significant challenge for the contemporary Catholic school is how to communicate a Catholic Christian ethos and charism to community members who may have little connection with Church traditions.

The word charism, in the tradition of the Church, refers to spiritual gifts used for the service of the whole community. These gifts or graces of the Holy Spirit are given to individuals and groups for the sake of others. In letters to the early Christian communities, St Paul lists gifts or charisms of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 12:4-11, 1 Cor 12:27-30, Rom 12:6-8, Eph 4:11, Gal 5:22-23). Paul also insists that the virtue of charity is above all other charisms (1 Cor 13:13). A Catholic Christian school draws upon this rich heritage of spiritual gifts to formulate its own unique way of being and giving service to all.

A central influence on the charism of any school is the person of Jesus Christ. All charisms seek to provide a pathway through which a school community might interpret and give voice to the centrality of Jesus Christ. Schools draw inspiration and direction from the stories of how their founding religious congregation, patron saint or significant people in the school’s history exemplified particular gifts of the Spirit in living out the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Therefore, in a Catholic Christian educational context, charism can be viewed as a spiritual energy that permeates a particular school based on significant people, values and stories.

Authentic Christian Community

The Catholic school aspires to be an authentic Christian community that builds quality relationships modelled on the vision and values of Jesus. An authentic Christian school community supports the dignity of each person, practises Christian hospitality and proclaims its values through word and action.

Catholic schools must be seen as “meeting places for those who wish to express Christian values in education”. The Catholic school, far more than any other, must be a community whose aim is the transmission of values for living. Its work is seen as promoting a faith-relationship with Christ in whom all values find fulfillment. But faith is principally assimilated through contact with people whose daily life bears witness to it. Christian faith, in fact, is born and grows inside a community. (The Catholic School, 53)

The writings of St Paul provide sound guidance to the early Christians in building and sustaining authentic communities based on the values of Christ. Paul identifies a variety of characteristics that mark an authentic Christian community and have a contemporary relevance for building community in Catholic schools.
These include:

Building peaceful relationships - So then, let us always seek the ways which lead to peace and the ways in which we can support one another (Romans 14:19)
Caring for the marginalised - If one part is hurt, all the parts share its pain (1 Corinthians 12:26a)
Rejoicing in the achievements of one another - If one part is honoured, all the parts share its joy (1 Corinthians 12:26b)
Seeking and offering forgiveness - Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you (Ephesians 4:32)
Supporting and encouraging one another - Therefore encourage one another and build each other up (1 Thessalonians 5:11).

The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium (18) reminds us that the Second Vatican Council affirmed the community dimension of the Catholic school. The Catholic school is more than just a place for academic learning but seeks to be a place of complete formation through a strong sense of interpersonal relationships

**Sense of the sacred**

A physical environment that uses the intellect, art, design and space to engage the senses contributes to the religious identity and culture of a community. The aesthetic, social and physical environment is a powerful means by which a school community creates, values and reflects a sense of the sacred.

Attending to the aesthetic aspects of the school setting can make a significant contribution to the religious and spiritual formation of young people. As the school seeks to foster what is good, beautiful and true, it communicates its beliefs and its faith through its total environment. The various areas of the curriculum, especially the humanities, make explicit this aesthetic dimension. Above all, a Catholic school is to be a place that affirms life in all its beauty and diversity ensuring that the creative energies and output of students and staff are valued. Through its aesthetic character the school proclaims its understanding of the link between the faith it proclaims and the community it serves. (The Catholic School and the Journey in Faith, p.5)

The Catholic tradition has a long held practice of connecting the design and care of particular buildings and their surrounds to the religious and spiritual formation of people. Art and architecture are more than merely functional within this tradition. Buildings and their surrounds have the capacity to inspire and to symbolise the beliefs and the hopes of a community. In this way they contribute to the nurturing of faith. (The Catholic School and the Journey in Faith, p.5)

Besides helping to foster a sense of pride in the school, well planned and cared for grounds and gardens can enhance a sense of the sacred. A school environment that is cared for can make a positive contribution to faith development.

Other areas of the classroom curriculum can offer a connection to the intellectual tradition of Catholicism in enhancing the sense of the sacred. For example, science and scientific discovery often present opportunities for exploring mystery, the unfathomable and the search for truth. In a Catholic Christian schooling context science can lead to questions of the divine and a sense of the sacred, awe and wonder, especially in areas related to cosmology, biology and genetics.

Catholic schools also endeavour to develop a social environment in which teachers, students and parents are valued and know they are valued as persons of worth and dignity, created in the image and likeness of God. A sense of God’s presence in the social environment of the school is fostered when people experience Christian hospitality, when they gather for prayer and worship and when they are supported in celebrating the everyday moments of life.

It is helpful to bear in mind, in harmony with the Second Vatican Council, that this community dimension in the Catholic school is not a merely sociological category; it has a theological foundation as well. The educating community, taken as a whole, is thus called to further the objective of a school as a place of complete formation through interpersonal relations. (The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium, 18)
Ethos and charism

Ethos and charism of the school express the Catholic identity and the assumptions, beliefs and values that the school community shares. They are reflected in what is done, how it is done and who is doing it. A school communicates its distinctive identity through its religious values, culture, rituals and practices.

Embedding ethos and charism

Promote elements associated with the ethos and charism of the school (e.g. particular values, key scripture passages, sayings or concepts)

Integrate the Catholic intellectual and aesthetic perspectives across all learning areas of the taught curriculum

Use symbols associated with the school’s charism in ritual and liturgy for affirming membership and a sense of belonging

Incorporate prayers associated with the school’s charism into the life of the community (e.g. Congregation foundation day, Prayer of St Francis, Prayers to Mary)

Celebrate days of religious significance to focus upon values associated with the school’s ethos and charism (e.g. Founder’s/Foundation Day, Feast Day)

Connect school devotional practices for the contemporary cultural context (e.g. Indigenous students, rural community, ecumenical enrolment)

Promote a positive sense of continuity and development related to the ethos and charism through the incorporation of historical material in school gatherings, celebrations, anniversaries and special occasions (e.g. photographs, artefacts from the past, elements of traditional prayers and devotional practices).

Living the vision and mission

Integrate the Archdiocesan Vision and values for Catholic Education into school vision and mission statements

Review and critique school practices in the light of the school vision and mission statements

Display prominently the school vision and mission statements in diverse and engaging modes (e.g. translations into other languages, electronic versions, child friendly versions)

Give public recognition to the commitment of role-holders within the school community (e.g. Secretaries’ Day, blessing of support staff, teachers’ day).

Communicating the ethos and charism

Research and communicate the history and heritage of the school to enhance understanding of its ethos, charism and Catholic identity

Explore the intellectual tradition behind the ethos and charism of the school and how this applies to classroom learning

Develop staff induction programs into the charism of the school and its contemporary application

Communicate the distinctive identity and nature of the school to the wider community (e.g. newspaper articles, shopping centre display, community service)

Promote the school’s charism and ethos through newsletters, staff prayers and visual displays

Give honour to the ethos and charism of the school through the use of iconography, sculpture and sacred art

Utilise student and staff skills in the arts to communicate significant elements of the ethos and charism of the school (e.g. a media production, a visual art display, a dramatic presentation of persons and events embodying school ethos and charism).
Authentic Christian community builds quality relationships modelled on the vision and values of Jesus. An authentic school community supports the dignity of each person, practises Christian hospitality and proclaims its values through word and action.

**Respecting dignity and diversity**

Develop policies, structures and practices to provide equity for all students.

Recognise the diversity of student achievement within and beyond the school community.

Celebrate the cultural diversity of the school (e.g. multicultural festivals, musical presentations at school gatherings by various cultural groups, displays of indigenous art).

Implement and evaluate behaviour support policies and practices in the light of the vision and values of Jesus.

Provide companioning programs for students who are new, at risk or marginalised (e.g. social skills programs).

Infuse the gospel into leadership programs for students and staff.

**Building quality relationships**

Welcome, encourage and support the participation of families in the life of the school.

Develop a community culture that is committed to reconciliation, quality relationships and promoting intercultural understanding.

Present, through drama, dance, music, visual art and media, traditional stories from various cultural groups.

Recognise and celebrate the everyday moments of people’s lives (e.g. announcements of births, celebrating birthdays, recording of moments in daily life of the school).

Build a culture of care and concern across the school (e.g. parent care & concern group, providing meals for a bereaved family, doing extra playground duty for a stressed colleague).

Acknowledge connections with the wider church community by partnering with the parish and local church through prayer, liturgy, social events and outreach.

**Practising Christian hospitality**

Develop a shared understanding of the Christian underpinnings of hospitality and welcome.

Promote a spirit of Christian hospitality and social courtesy to all visitors.

Maintain, inviting, clean, uncluttered, and clearly signed public spaces.

Practise with students social courtesies (e.g. greeting people, introducing a visitor, welcoming a guest speaker).

Develop resources that welcome and orient new families to the school (e.g. welcome CD, handbook, website).
Sense of the sacred uses the intellect, art, design and reflective spaces to engage the senses. It contributes to the religious identity and culture of a community. The aesthetic, social and physical environment is a powerful means by which a school community creates and values a sense of the sacred.

Creating a sense of the sacred

Engage students in the prayerful use of local prayer sites, sacred spaces and physical structures (e.g. labyrinths, peace gardens, local parish church)

Review the appropriateness of existing religious art and iconography

Establish and maintain sacred and reflective spaces in classrooms and around the school

Provide opportunities for students to explore God’s presence through art and other media (e.g. engage an artist-in-residence, hold an exhibition of students’ religious artwork).

Enhancing the religious culture

Provide professional learning opportunities on the power and potential of the aesthetic in creating a sense of the sacred. Make links to all areas of learning

Provide professional learning for staff on religious art and iconography

Establish practices and procedures for movement from secular psychological space to a readiness for prayer and celebration (e.g. use of bells, chimes, silence, ritual action)

Incorporate student art and religious iconography into school reception areas and communal spaces to reflect the liturgical seasons and life of the school community.

Resourcing for a sense of the sacred

Plan for the acquisition of quality art, artefacts and iconography for classrooms and school environments

Use the natural environment to enhance a sense of the sacred (e.g. reflective walks, rainforest areas, peace/prayer gardens)

Identify and source suitable resources for creating an aesthetic environment for liturgy and ritual (e.g. music, symbols, materials, artefacts, images)

Explore ways the creative arts can be used to enrich the religious life and culture of the school (e.g. poetry in liturgies of the word, drama in Easter celebrations, creative use of multimedia in prayer rituals)

Support and resource staff to create meaningful prayer spaces and experiences in classroom settings.
Social Action & Justice

Evangelisation

living
the
gospel

spiritual
formation

to the wider
community

witness

Social Action

Justice

sense of the
sacred

authentic
catholic
community

justice in
the school
community

action
for
justice

reflection
on action
for justice

Everyday
life

Celebrating
Sacraments

Authentic
Christian
Community
EVANGELISATION AND FAITH FORMATION

Evangelisation means bringing the Good News to all strata of humanity, and through its influence, transforming humanity from within and making it new. (On Evangelisation in the Modern World, 18)

To evangelise is first of all to bear witness, in a simple and direct way, to God revealed by Jesus Christ, in the Holy Spirit; to bear witness that in his Son God has loved the world – that in his Incarnate Word he has given being to all things and has called every man and woman to eternal life. (Evangelisation in the Modern World, 26)

At the end of Matthew’s gospel, Jesus commissioned his followers to “go and make disciples of all nations” (Mt 28:19) The term used by the Church to describe this activity is evangelisation. The Church’s understanding of evangelisation includes both proclamation of the gospel message to all people and its challenge to each individual to inner transformation in response to the gospel proclaimed.

When individuals and communities express in a simple and direct way who they are and what they do because of their relationship with Jesus Christ, they are engaging in the work of evangelisation.

The Catholic school participates in the evangelising mission of the Church and is a privileged environment in which Christian education is carried out. In this way Catholic schools are at once places of evangelisation, of complete formation, of inculturation, of apprenticeship in a lively dialogue between young people of different religions and social backgrounds. (The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium, 11)

Catholic schools are both educating and evangelising communities. They are evangelising communities to the extent that they give an authentic voice to the religious dimension of life through the lens of a community of faith. Catholic schools evangelise through their particular culture, through the life witness of members and through the curriculum. These are means through which a school community invites all of its members into a conversation motivated and inspired by the Good News of Jesus Christ.

Catholic schools invite people to move towards commitment to and involvement in a Christian community. This occurs through the process of evangelisation. People are invited to share in a more conscious and deepened way the Christian community’s experience of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. Schools can make effective use of staff and student skills with information, communication and learning technologies to effectively enhance processes of evangelisation or re-evangelisation.

Within the context of the Catholic school, faith formation describes how its members are immersed in the shared beliefs, language, symbols, liturgy and activities of the Catholic Christian tradition. While schools recognise that they make a contribution to the faith formation of individuals, faith formation is a life long process. The role of the Catholic school in faith formation is to nurture both those who are already actively engaged with a faith tradition and those who are yet to engage in a journey of explicit, active faith.

Thus, evangelisation and faith formation are focused in an explicit way on the call to hear the gospel of Jesus Christ, to respond to it in daily life and to deepen personal understanding and faith.

Three elements of evangelisation and faith formation are:

- living the gospel
- spiritual formation
- witness to the wider community.
Living the gospel

Living the gospel of Jesus Christ is a call to openness that invites each person to experience a change of heart through engaging in the world as an active Christian. A school fosters this call in its individual members by creating an environment that encourages and invites them to discipleship and ministry.

The Catholic school loses its purpose without constant reference to the gospel and a frequent encounter with Christ. It derives all the energy necessary for its educational work from Christ and thus creates in the school community an atmosphere permeated with the gospel spirit of freedom and love. (The Catholic School, 55)

A Catholic school assists its members to live the gospel of Jesus Christ when it helps them to develop a personal relationship with Jesus; use scripture as a guide and inspiration for living; and create an environment where the attitudes and actions of Jesus provide a model and standard for the community.

It is imperative therefore that the Church proclaim the Gospel to the young in ways that they can understand, ways that can enable them to grasp the hand of Christ who never ceases to reach out to them, especially in their dark times. (The Church in Oceania, 44)

In living the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Catholic school seeks to be a place that recognises the sacramentality of everyday moments in the school day and the everyday lives of its members. The school seeks to model a culture of hope and joy that provides a powerful expression of the ‘Good News’ of Jesus.

Spiritual formation

Spiritual formation in a Catholic school occurs within the context of the Catholic Christian faith tradition. Such formation is orientated to the spiritual growth of each individual and the spiritual flourishing of the school community. Spiritual formation is sensitive to the faith background and life journey of individuals within the community. School communities recognise moments and opportunities for formation and find ways to nurture the spirituality of each individual in ways that respect their religious background and their informed conscience. (Code of Canon Law 748:2).

Christian spirituality is rooted in the life of the Triune God, focused on Jesus Christ, situated in the Church, and ever responsive to the Holy Spirit. It is also visionary, sacramental, relational and transformational. (McBrien, 1981, p 1058)

Spiritual formation contributes to the journey of a person towards wholeness. At the heart of Christian spirituality is the image of God - Father, Son and Spirit - as a community of love. Thus, for the Christian, spirituality centres on loving relationships and the building of Christian community. Catholic Christian spirituality has a rich heritage, reflecting a variety of spiritual traditions from diverse historical periods, cultures and faith communities that continue to be relevant to the search for meaning today.

Spiritual formation in a Catholic Christian school invites students to see the realities of our world in new and life-giving ways. It calls them to recognise the presence of God in daily life experiences. Catholic school communities promote experiences which assist students to live in healthy relationships, sensitive to the needs and gifts of others, based on the belief that to be human and to be Christian is to live in community. Such spiritual formation is transformational, leading to a richer connection with the presence of the Spirit who heals, reconciles, renews, gives life, bestows peace, sustains hope, brings joy and creates unity.
Witness to the wider community

Christians are called to give witness to the beliefs and values of the Catholic Christian tradition and proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ. The Catholic school, as part of the evangelising mission of the Church, witnesses to the wider community through its physical presence and authentic proclamation of the gospel in word and action.

*Being a Christian means going out on mission to transform the world, leaving our comfort zone to enter our workplaces and places of recreation to proclaim good news, returning to the comfort of our communion to strengthen and to be strengthened, and then going out again in an unceasing rhythm that deepens the communion and strengthens the mission of Christ’s body.* (Archbishop John Bathersby, Address to Synod Preparation, 22 March, 2003)

The Greek word for witness, *martus*, gave us the English word ‘martyr’, meaning one who voluntarily suffers for the sake of their faith or in defence of some virtue. In Christianity, the word witness means that the believer gives testimony to their faith in Jesus Christ and his gospel in all their thoughts, words and deeds, even at the cost of personal sacrifice, indifference or hostility on the part of others.

Catholic school communities are called to be counter-cultural in witnessing to Christian beliefs and values. Such witness will at times challenge the dominant social culture and come at some cost to the school community. In seeking to witness to the broader community, Catholic schools face the challenge of relating to those who do not necessarily share the common understandings and life-patterns of Christians. Christian witness challenges school communities to negotiate the tension of maintaining Christian integrity while engaging respectfully with the reality of people’s lives and the different stages of their journeys in faith.

The Catholic school, by its very physical presence within the local community, can provide a positive witness to gospel values. The care and maintenance of facilities, the presence of religious iconography and symbols, the conduct of students and staff and the school’s capacity to make connections with local agencies all contribute to its evangelising witness.
Living the gospel

Living the gospel calls for openness that invites each person to experience a change of heart by engaging with the world as Jesus did. A school fosters this call in its individual members by creating an environment that encourages and invites them to discipleship and ministry.

Creating a Christ-centred environment

Evaluate the effectiveness of the ways in which Jesus Christ is presented and interpreted in the life of the school (e.g. through artwork, stories, public gatherings, school website).

Plan for prayer and worship in the school that is Christ-centred and strongly connected to the Cycles of the Liturgical Year.

Make connections between the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and contemporary people and events (within and beyond the school community).

Create a culture of hope, optimism, joy and inclusion that reflects the life of Jesus Christ through routines and practices (e.g. hospitality, forgiveness and outreach to the marginalised).

Embedding the gospel in practices and processes

Use restorative justice processes to develop a Christian culture of forgiveness and reconciliation.

Establish policies practices and structures that promote inclusion and a sense of belonging to a Christian community.

Provide opportunities for staff, students and parents to understand how traditions and practices in the school community connect with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Support staff programs on Christian ministry and vocation.

Celebrating the Good News

Identify and use scriptural texts to promote and support the Christian values of the school.

Recognise and ritualise the rich tapestry of students, staff and families through personal and public recognition.

Introduce elements of Christian joy and hope into the celebrations of school life.

Familiarise the community with a range of Christian writings and writers who celebrate joy and hope in life and present the gospel message in engaging ways.
Spiritual formation

Spiritual formation in a Catholic school occurs within the context of the Catholic Christian faith tradition. Such formation is orientated to the spiritual growth of each individual and the spiritual flourishing of the school community. Spiritual formation is sensitive to the faith background and life journey of individuals within the community. School communities recognise moments and opportunities for formation and find ways to nurture the spirituality of each individual in ways that respect their religious background and their informed conscience.

Providing formation for staff

Establish priorities for the resourcing of spiritual and faith formation initiatives

Provide professional learning opportunities for staff about the stages of personal growth and faith development of children and adolescents (e.g. through making available online learning modules, face-to-face and online discussion groups, staff formation days, external courses)

Engage people with expertise in spiritual formation to provide appropriate training and mentoring for various groups and individuals (e.g. Archdiocesan programs, parish courses, outside providers, study programs)

Establish and maintain mentoring relationships in spirituality utilising online and face-to-face modes.

Planning formation for students

Adapt spirituality and faith formation frameworks to enhance the spiritual formation of students (e.g. BCE Catching Fire, frameworks related to the charism of Religious Institutes)

Provide faith formation experiences for potential student leaders (e.g. retreats, pilgrimages, meditation and prayer experiences, online discussion forums)

Support and resource staff to collaboratively plan and facilitate retreat and reflection experiences for students

Seek out opportunities to integrate formation experiences into class and year level camps and trips.

Responding to diversity

Incorporate data from the religious profile of students into the planning of spiritual formation experiences (e.g. students from diverse Christian denominations, students from religions other than Christianity)

Celebrate the religious unity and diversity within the school community by inviting representatives of other faith communities to participate in specific events.

Seeking creative expressions

Provide opportunities for students to develop and express spiritual awareness through the creative arts utilising dance, drama, media, music and the visual arts

Explore creative ways of promoting an awareness of the spiritual dimension of life (e.g. pod casts, blogs, books, articles, websites, discussion circles, a lunchtime speakers’ corner, panel discussions)

Utilise resources and develop activities that enrich and nurture an appreciation of the wide variety of spiritual charisms within the Christian tradition (e.g. Benedictine, Franciscan, Marist, Josephite, Edmund Rice, Presentation and Mercy).
Witness to the wider community

Witness to the wider community calls Christians to give witness to the beliefs and values of the Catholic Christian tradition and proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ. The Catholic school, as part of the evangelising mission of the Church, witnesses to the wider community through its physical presence and authentic proclamation of the gospel in word and action.

Celebrating with others

- Build collaborative relationships with the parish and local Church in planning joint celebrations (e.g. Social Justice Sunday, Mission Week, NAIDOC, Multicultural Sunday).
- Invite students to participate in retreat experiences and reflection days with students from other Catholic schools.
- Invite representatives of other Christian Churches to participate in school celebrations (e.g. Easter celebrations, Week of Prayer for Christian Unity).
- Provide opportunities for students to plan for and participate in ecumenical and inter-faith experiences connected to the curriculum.
- Consider online reflection experiences for students drawing upon suitable resources of the internet and other materials.

Reaching out

- Support parents, staff and students seeking to become Catholic through participation in parish RCIA programs.
- Develop ways of meeting the pastoral needs of students and families (e.g. regular Make a Meal sessions for families in need, prayer circles, support groups, home visits).
- Teach students how to witness to the values that the school espouses at external events and activities (e.g. respectful behaviour in public settings, gratitude and graciousness, positive participation, considering the needs of others first).
- Brainstorm ways the school might be a presence in the lives of members of the local community (e.g. aged care residents, parish groups, service organisations).

Making connections

- Invite clergy and parish staff to participate in the everyday and significant events of the school.
- Encourage students to participate and take on leadership roles in the youth ministry of their local parish or in Church movements.
- Engage with and promote parish, deanery and Archdiocesan initiatives, events and gatherings.

Communicating the Message

- Articulate explicitly the connections between school policies, structures and practices and Christian values and principles.
- Communicate to the school community information about parish and Archdiocesan events (e.g. Mass times, Sacramental programs, youth initiatives, faith development programs).
- Communicate explicitly the school values and beliefs through newsletters, local media and the utilisation of information, communication and learning technologies.
PRAYER AND WORSHIP

Prayer cannot be reduced to the spontaneous outpouring of interior impulse: in order to pray, one must have the will to pray. Nor is it enough to know what the Scriptures reveal about prayer: one must also learn how to pray. Through a living transmission within the believing and praying Church, the Holy Spirit teaches the children of God how to pray. (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2650)

Prayer is the raising of one’s mind and heart to God or the requesting of good things from God. To pray is to respond to the wonder and mystery of life. In the Christian tradition prayer fosters a personal and living relationship with God as Trinity - Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Worship is described as the adoration of God that may be expressed through praise, thanksgiving, self-offering, sorrow and petition. Worship of God is described as private when it occurs anywhere and at anytime. Liturgy is public worship centred on Christ. Worship can be expressed through bodily gestures or postures, in rites and ceremonies. (The Essential Catholic Handbook p 267)

Integral to the life of a Catholic school, prayer and worship have the potential to nourish the spiritual growth of all members of the school community. Prayer and worship provide the context and the resources for individuals and groups to celebrate their life and identity as members of the school and to nurture their relationship in faith with God and with one another. Staff in Catholic schools require ongoing support and formation in understanding prayer and worship in the Catholic tradition and in developing the knowledge and skills needed to develop experiences of prayer and worship with students. In particular knowledge and skills related to dance, drama, media, music and visual arts can have powerful potential to enhance the quality of prayer and worship experiences. Teachers may also draw upon student understanding and skills about genre, purpose, context and meaning in assisting them to write appropriate texts for prayer and worship experiences.

The life of faith is expressed in acts of religion. The teacher will assist students to open their hearts in confidence to Father, Son, and Holy Spirit through personal and liturgical prayer. (The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School, 83)

Prayer and worship in a Catholic school help create a sense of purpose and identity within the community. They draw the community into an understanding of our shared humanity, link us with the Church throughout the world and send us out to share our Good News.

Three elements of prayer and worship are:

- christian prayer
- celebrating liturgy and sacraments
- ritualising everyday life.

Christian prayer

Prayer, as the raising of the mind and heart to God or the requesting of good things from God, contributes to the faith growth of individuals and the building of Christian community. Schools draw on the richness of the Catholic tradition, the wider Christian tradition and their own particular charism to nurture the prayer life of the school.

There is no other way of Christian prayer than Christ. Whether our prayer is communal or personal, vocal or interior, it has access to the Father only if we pray “in the name” of Jesus. The sacred humanity of Jesus is therefore the way by which the Holy Spirit teaches us to pray to God our Father. (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2664)
The Church invites the faithful to regular prayer: daily prayers; the Liturgy of the Hours; Sunday Eucharist; and the feasts of the Liturgical Year. The Catechism of the Catholic Church identifies three expressions of prayer, namely: vocal prayer; meditation; and contemplative prayer.

In vocal prayer a person, or a group, gives voice in an external way to the interior prayer of the heart following Jesus’ example of prayer to God. Meditation is a prayerful quest engaging thought, imagination, emotion and desire. This may include readings, reflection, journaling, silence and stillness. At the heart of contemplative prayer is the simple act of being with God, recognising in stillness and silence, God’s indwelling presence.

Pray without ceasing. In all circumstances give thanks, for this is the will of God for you in Christ Jesus. (1 Thess. 5:17-18)

The essential forms of prayer in the Christian tradition are: blessing and adoration; petition and intercession; thanksgiving and praise. All of these forms are present in the Mass. Sources of Christian prayer include Scriptures, Liturgy of the Church, the theological virtues of faith, hope and love, the created world, our relationships and life experiences.

There are various environments and resources for prayer. Prayer may take place in many different contexts and settings. In celebrating a significant feast day or liturgical season in the life of the Church, it may be appropriate to gather for a prayerful school assembly. Meditation and contemplative prayer might be best experienced in a school prayer room or Chapel. Reflective walks or journaling may be more appropriate in outdoor settings or retreat venues. Members of the school community are assisted to recognise the religious dimension in the everyday moments of life through the practice of daily classroom prayer.

When the school community gathers in prayer, it draws on the breadth of the Christian tradition to build an understanding that its prayer is joined with the prayer of the whole Christian community – the people of God. Schools draw on their charism as additional resources for prayer.

Staff and students within a Catholic school should have opportunities to engage in prayer on a daily basis. In the course of their years in Catholic schools, students will experience a variety of formal and informal expressions of prayer, appropriate to their age and development.

**Celebration of liturgy and sacraments**

Liturgy and sacraments are part of the formal, public prayer and worship of the Church. The Church encourages full, conscious and active participation in liturgy. Schools celebrate the Liturgy of the Church through celebration of the sacraments, Liturgy of the Word and Liturgy of the Hours.

The original meaning of the word “liturgy” was a public work or service on behalf of the people. In Christian understanding the word liturgy refers to the participation of the People of God in “the work of God” (Jn 17:4). The New Testament understanding of “liturgy” includes celebration of divine worship, proclamation of the gospel and acts of charity. (CCC 1069-1070) Therefore, a Catholic community’s celebration of liturgy both reflects and influences what it proclaims, who it is and what it does.

The Church earnestly desires that all the faithful should be led to that fully conscious, and active participation in liturgical celebrations which is demanded by the very nature of the liturgy. Such participation by the Christian people as “a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a redeemed people (1 Pet. 2:9; cf. 2:4-5), is their right and duty by reason of their baptism. (Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, 14)
Sacraments are signs of grace, instituted by Christ and entrusted to the Church through which the life of God is bestowed. There are seven sacraments in the Catholic Church: Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist, Penance, Anointing of the Sick, Holy Orders, and Matrimony. The purpose of the sacraments is to sanctify, to build up the Body of Christ and to give worship to God. Sacraments are signs and they also instruct. Sacraments pre-suppose faith and nourish and express faith (Code of Canon Law 1123 -1131).

Catholic schools are ecclesial communities. Schools form their members for conscious and active participation in the liturgy and sacraments. In its turn, conscious and active participation in liturgy and sacraments is in itself formative. Formation includes opportunities for instruction about the nature, purpose and structure of liturgical celebrations and of appropriate ways of participation. Such formation assists community members to understand that liturgy also leads to action in the world.

Celebration of the liturgical life of the Church includes opportunities for celebration of the sacraments, Liturgies of the Word and the Liturgy of the Hours. To enable fully conscious and active participation in liturgy, it is important that schools reflect on the nature of their communities and the age and background of participants when selecting the appropriate form of liturgical celebration.

Careful preparation and planning are essential to good liturgy and celebration of the sacraments. The more students are familiarised with the words, actions and gestures, symbols, structures and environments of liturgies and sacraments, the more they are able to come to a more conscious and active participation.

**Ritualising everyday life**

In Christian communities, rituals combine words, actions and symbols to make meaning of the mystery of life in the light of the gospel. Christians believe that all creation is good and is infused with the presence of God. School communities affirm the sacredness of everyday life by recognising and celebrating God in the created world, in relationships with others and in events and experiences.

No theological principle or focus is more characteristic of Catholicism or more central to its identity than the principle of sacramentality. This principle reflects the central Catholic conviction that God mediates Godself to us and we encounter God’s presence and grace coming to meet us through the ordinary of life – through our minds and bodies, through our works and efforts, in the depth of our own being and through our relationships with others, through the events and experiences that come our way, through all forms of human art and creativity, through nature and the whole created order, through everything and anything of life. (Groome, 1996, p 112)

As well as the celebration of formal liturgies and prayer, school communities celebrate prayer rituals to mark the everyday patterns of life, rites of passage and moments of critical concern or joyful exuberance. These prayer rituals have a recognisable structure and may use elements and symbols similar to those of the prayer and liturgy of the Catholic tradition. However, they provide opportunities for increased freedom and flexibility in their design and celebration; they can be led by community members; draw on themes and experiences identified by students and the community; and incorporate secular elements.

Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground. (Ex 3:5)

The character of the school as an ecclesial community also influences other rituals and celebrations of the school. Schools are encouraged to reflect on the ways that such “non religious” rituals and celebrations contribute to the religious life of the school.
Christian prayer

Christian prayer raises the mind and heart to God or requests good things from God and contributes to the faith growth of individuals and the building of Christian community. Schools draw on the richness of the Catholic tradition, the wider Christian tradition and their own particular charism to nurture the prayer life of the school.

Drawing on the tradition

Teach and use a variety of traditional prayers and devotions for individual and communal use (e.g. Our Father, Memorare, Glory Be, Rosary, Eucharistic adoration)

Identify appropriate times and occasions for different forms (e.g. prayers of praise, intercession) and expressions (e.g. vocal, meditative, contemplative) of prayer

Prepare and disseminate a calendar to ensure a prayerful perspective in celebrations of liturgical seasons (e.g. Lent), feasts (e.g. Mary Help of Christians) and significant events (e.g. ANZAC Day)

Provide or create a school prayer book that includes a range of prayer forms (e.g. blessing and adoration; petition and intercession; thanksgiving and praise).

Nurturing prayer life

Model and explain gestures used in prayer celebrations (e.g. Sign of the Cross, sign of peace, blessings, prayer postures, a gesture created for a specific occasion)

Schedule time to allow for the preparation of students to enhance their participation in prayer experiences

Teach students how to identify and use scriptural texts in prayer and worship

Use predictable patterns in prayer and worship across the school

Involve students in the creation of prayers for use in school celebrations

Establish a culture and climate that values and emphasises a sense of the sacred during communal prayer times

Develop creative ways of building a culture of prayer within a school community (e.g. a prayer website, an intentions book, a prayer blog, a prayer garden, sacred spaces, sensory stimuli)

Access professional learning opportunities for staff to broaden and deepen their understandings about prayer, its purpose, meaning and expression.

Make effective use of music and the visual arts to enhance prayer experiences.

Providing a variety of experiences

Immerse students in diverse experiences of prayer (e.g. traditional prayers and devotions, meditation and contemplation, silence, labyrinths and mandalas, praying with scripture, litanies and mantras, using the arts as a stimulus for prayer)

Provide opportunities for students to engage with different approaches to meditation (e.g. Christian meditation, Ignatian meditation, Lectio Divina, guided meditation)

Incorporate appropriate symbols when developing prayer experiences (e.g. flame, water, oil, colour, shape, natural elements, religious symbols, seasonal symbols)

Provide voluntary opportunities for prayer.
Celebration of liturgy and sacraments

Celebration of liturgy and sacraments are part of the formal, public prayer and worship of the Church. The Church encourages full, conscious and active participation in liturgy. Schools celebrate the Liturgy of the Church through celebration of the sacraments, Liturgy of the Word and Liturgy of the Hours.

Developing skills in liturgy

Educate staff and students about the principles, structures and planning of liturgy

Provide formation for staff, students and parents to undertake appropriate roles of ministry within the liturgy (e.g. Eucharistic ministers, readers, music ministers, preparing the sacred space)

Utilise planning templates in preparing for liturgical celebrations

Negotiate with clergy clear, agreed expectations about the celebration of liturgy and sacraments within the school.

Promoting participation in liturgy

Develop clear expectations about procedures and practices for the reverent celebration of liturgy (e.g. entering and leaving, responding, movement and gestures, receiving communion)

Prepare students for full and reverent participation in liturgies (e.g. practise reading and reflecting on scripture, rehearse music, explain and practise particular actions and movements)

Arrange the physical environment and provide resources conducive to full and active participation in liturgy and sacrament (e.g. seating arrangements, physical environment, texts of responses, songs and actions)

Encourage and support student participation in parish, deanery or Archdiocesan liturgies and gatherings

Seek creative ways students may contribute to the enhancement of the church or sacred space in which a liturgy is to be celebrated.

Celebrating Sacraments

Identify and provide opportunities for the celebration of the sacraments of Eucharist and Penance within the life of the school

Support students and families engaged in sacramental preparation and celebration through recognition and prayer

Promote and support the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) in local parishes.
Ritualising everyday life occurs through rituals combining words, actions and symbols that make meaning of the mystery of life in the light of the gospel. Christians believe that all creation is good and is infused with the presence of God. School communities affirm the sacredness of everyday life by recognising and celebrating God in the created world, in relationships with others and in events and experiences.

Ritualising everyday life

Ritualising life events

Ritualise rites of passage (e.g. transition to secondary school, induction into leadership, engagements, retirement, welcoming new staff/new students, births in the community)

Use or design commissioning and blessing rituals to respond to life events (e.g. beginning and end of year, outreach activities, Mothers/Fathers Day, excursions, tours and representative activities)

Recognise opportunities to ritualise and prayerfully support members of the community facing issues of grief and loss (e.g. Light a Candle website, school newsletter, memories book, messages of sympathy, prayer rituals)

Identify and source appropriate rituals, spaces, symbols and resources that may assist staff and students prepare for and respond to critical incidents and traumatic events

Look for opportunities to include elements of hope, joy and celebration in ritualising everyday events in the lives of students (e.g. educational, pastoral, sporting and cultural achievements, personal moments of awe and wonder, discoveries)

Utilise knowledge and skills in dance and drama to ritualise life events

Promote simple rituals for families to use in the home.

Using prayer rituals in the school

Include prayer rituals in the day-to-day procedures and routines of school life (e.g. lighting a candle to begin meetings; saying the school prayer/motto at gatherings; times of silence and reflection before decision-making)

Promote the use of sacred spaces by individuals and groups to experience silence and stillness in the everyday (e.g. chapel, prayer room or reflection/peace garden)

Make use of symbolic and ritual actions that are reminders of the sacredness of every individual (e.g. sprinkling with water, blessing with oil, sign of peace, placing of hands)

Incorporate simple ritual into classroom prayer, assembly prayer, staff and parent gatherings

Plan prayerful reflective practices as part of learning and teaching (e.g. reflecting on daily learnings, celebrations of learning, rituals related to the focus of learning)

Incorporate rituals of reconciliation and forgiveness into classroom practice, behaviour support strategies and the life of the school

Design appropriate and meaningful rituals for use on retreat/reflection days (e.g. affirmation, reconciliation, awe and wonder, valuing self)

Invite parental involvement in prayer rituals (e.g. a father sharing a story of parenting during a Father’s Day Liturgy; proclaiming the Word; parents anointing children).
Social Action & Justice

Justice in the school community

Action for justice

Reflection on action for justice

Religious Identity & Cultural Worship
SOCIAL ACTION AND JUSTICE

What does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love tenderly and to walk humbly with your God. (Micah 6:8)

Three major themes run through Scripture and Catholic social teaching. A core theme is that each human person is made in the image and likeness of God and thus has an inalienable human dignity and worth. Derived from this core theme are two further themes. These are the rights and duties that are proper to human persons and the freedom and responsibility that underpin these rights and duties. In more recent times there is growing awareness of the application of these three themes to both human persons and the whole of God’s creation.

Ten themes of Social Justice give expression to the human worth and dignity of each individual made in the image and likeness of God. These are:

- Respect for the human person
- Preferential option for the poor
- Political and economic rights
- Promotion of the common good
- Subsidiarity
- Political participation
- Economic justice
- Stewardship
- Global solidarity
- Promotion of Peace.

A Catholic Christian understanding of justice has emerged from the biblical tradition. This rich biblical understanding portrays a just society as one marked by the fullness of love, compassion and peace. Catholic social teaching makes a distinction between three dimensions of basic justice: commutative justice, distributive justice and social justice. Commutative justice calls for fundamental fairness in people’s dealings with one another. Distributive justice requires that the allocation of income, wealth and power in society be evaluated in light of its effects on those whose basic material needs are unmet. Social justice obliges people to be active and productive participants in the life of society and insists that society has a duty to enable them to participate in this way. (Economic Justice for All, 68-71)

An additional, essential element of justice in a Catholic school is the application of the principles and processes of restorative justice. These are evident when school communities search for solutions that promote, reconcile and rebuild right relationships with God and with one another.

Social action is the striving to bring authentic moral values to the organisation of society and to the social institutions - educational, economic, political - by which society functions. (Catechism of the Catholic Church 2426-2436)

Social action brings into sharp focus Jesus’ vision for the coming of the Kingdom of God where sinfulness, brokenness and injustice are transformed and peace and harmony are restored. For Catholics, social action finds its foundation in the scriptures, particularly the Gospels and in the Church’s Social Teaching.
Applying social action and justice requires two important dispositions: empathy (the capacity to stand in the shoes of another) and solidarity (the capacity to walk with another). Catholic schools work to build these dispositions in students through programs for service learning, social justice programs and outreach experiences. Social action and justice in schools have a particular connection with knowledge and skills from the social sciences. Notions of continuity and change, democratic process, participation, stewardship, sustainability, peace, justice, cultural diversity, inclusion, power, resources and social systems are foundational to the social sciences. Schools can plan, implement and reflect upon experiences of social action and justice drawing upon the social sciences, together with the scriptures and Catholic social teaching.

Three elements of social action and justice are:

- justice in the school community
- action for justice
- reflection on action for justice.

**Justice in the school community**

The school practises justice within its own community through policies, structures and practices that are consistent with the themes of Catholic social teaching. Respect for the dignity of the human person underlies Catholic social justice themes.

> Belief in the inherent dignity of the human person is the foundation of all Catholic social teaching. Human life is sacred, and the dignity of the human person is the starting point for a moral vision for society. This principle is grounded in the idea that the person is made in the image of God. The person is the clearest reflection of God among us. This teaching rests on one basic principle: individual human beings are the foundation, the cause and the end of every social institution. (Mother and Teacher, 219)

A just school is faithful to Catholic social teaching when its policies, structures and practices promote the dignity of all members of the community. Of central importance is the establishment of positive relationships and decision-making processes that respect the dignity of individuals and promote the common good. These are reflected in significant areas of school life such as enrolment procedures, decisions about curriculum, school fees and levies, academic reporting and behaviour support.

The practice of justice within a school community needs to respect the principle of subsidiarity. This principle holds that decisions are best made and enacted at the lowest appropriate level. Within a Catholic school this means that all those affected by policies, practices and decisions are appropriately engaged in processes of developing and implementing them. Thus, a Catholic school community develops policies, structures and practices that promote participation and inclusion.

> The “principle of subsidiarity” must be respected: “A community of a higher order should not interfere with the life of a community of a lower order, taking over its functions.” In case of need it should, rather, support the smaller community and help to coordinate its activity with activities in the rest of society for the sake of the common good. (The Hundredth Year, 48)
Action for justice

The Christian vocation entails action for justice, peace and ecological sustainability. This is based on the dream of Jesus to establish the Kingdom of God. School communities act for justice when they demonstrate a commitment to the poor and marginalised, actively work for peace and practise stewardship of the earth.

* A consistent theme of Catholic social teaching is the option or love of preference for the poor. Today, this preference has to be expressed in worldwide dimensions, embracing the immense numbers of the hungry, the needy, the homeless, those without medical care, and those without hope. (On Social Concern, 42)

The Catholic school seeks to look beyond itself and engage with activities that promote consciousness of issues of poverty in the world. Poverty takes many forms and is not just restricted to the hungry and homeless. A Christian understanding of poverty encompasses a poverty of spirit as well as material poverty. Thus, the poor might include those who are marginalised by the dominant culture, those who lack emotional support or those who suffer discrimination because of their difference.

Within a Christian world view, peace in the world begins with a conversion of heart in the individual.

* Respect for and development of human life requires peace. Peace is not merely the absence of war, and it is not limited to maintaining a balance of powers between adversaries. Peace cannot be attained on earth without safeguarding the goods of persons, free communication among people, respect for the dignity of persons and peoples, and the assiduous practice of fraternity. Peace is “the tranquillity of order.” Peace is the work of justice and the effect of charity. (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2304)

A Catholic school seeks to structure its physical and emotional/relational environment in a way that promotes peaceful relationships and supports the development of peacemaking skills. The making and maintaining of peace in a school community is an ongoing challenge. However, in John’s Gospel, Jesus reminds his followers that peace will prevail in spite of difficulties.

* I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world. (Jn 16:33)

For Christians, stewardship is the conviction that every gift of nature and grace comes from God and that the human person is not the absolute owner of his or her gifts or possessions but rather the trustee or steward of them. These gifts are given in trust for the building of the Kingdom of God.

Christians are called to appreciate the spiritual and theological significance of all creation. In doing so, they exercise stewardship of the planet and its resources. Christians are called to care for all creation and to exercise sound moral judgements about the use of the world’s resources. There is a moral imperative to take into account the welfare of future generations as well as those deprived of a fair share of the world’s resources in these times. Catholic social teaching calls each individual and each community to show concern for the common good and to work for peace and justice in the world.

* The most profound motive for our work is this knowing that we share in creation. Learning the meaning of creation in our daily lives will help us to live holier lives. It will fill the world with the spirit of Christ, the spirit of justice, charity, and peace. (On Human Work, 25)
Catholic schools are encouraged to incorporate service learning into their curriculum. Service learning involves deepening one’s understanding of the scriptural foundations and meaning of Christian service and how Christian service is exercised in a practical way as a response to identified social issues and areas of need. Christian service includes active engagement in outreach and immersion experiences that benefit both those engaging in Christian service and those receiving such service. Critical reflection on experiences of Christian service in the light of the gospel and the social teaching of the Church is an integral dimension of service learning in a Catholic Christian school.

**Reflection on action for justice**

Christian action for justice requires critical reflection and prayerful discernment in the light of the gospel and Catholic social teaching. School communities consciously plan for and implement these reflective elements into their justice initiatives through an action-reflection process.

The process of reflection is an integral part of lifelong learning. In an everyday sense, reflection is a ‘looking back’ on experiences so as to learn from them. Therefore reflection is a means of constructing knowledge about one’s self, one’s community and about the world. In a Catholic school context, students are supported to engage in a process of critical reflection by analysing, reconsidering and questioning their experiences in the light of the gospel and Catholic social teaching.

*For these reasons the Church must incorporate into all levels of her educational system the teaching of social justice and the biblical and ethical principles that support it. (Economic Justice for all, 342)*

Reflection on action for justice leads to a richer and deeper understanding of how such experiences respond to the challenge of the gospel and social teaching of the Church.

Service learning, related to the age and stage of student development, assists students to reflect upon the rights and duties that are proper to human persons and the freedom and responsibility that underpin these rights and duties to become reflective, self-directed learners. (cf. Brisbane Catholic Education Learning Framework)
Justice in the school community

The school practises justice within its own community through policies, structures and practices that are consistent with the themes of Catholic social teaching. Respect for the dignity of the human person underlies Catholic social justice themes.

Respecting the dignity of all

Promote communication and interaction between members of the school community that respect the rights and dignity of all (e.g. student reports, telephone conversations, conflict resolution, mediation, classroom interactions, behaviour support, staffroom conversations)

Identify marginalised groups within the school community and develop ways to demonstrate welcome and support

Implement induction programs to support new students and families from diverse backgrounds

Review policies, structures and practices in the light of the diversity within the school community (e.g. cultural, social, religious, economic factors).

Praying for justice

Integrate a justice focus into school liturgies, classroom prayer and prayer assemblies (e.g. draw on resources from Caritas, Catholic Mission, St Vincent De Paul)

Identify structures and practices that provide opportunities to encourage a prayer response to justice issues (e.g. newsletter, assembly prayer, meetings, foyer displays, email, noticeboards, classroom prayer).

Building a just community

Audit policies, structures and practices in the light of Catholic themes of social justice (e.g. behaviour support, inclusion practices, enrolment policy, engaging students in decisions)

Support the principle of subsidiarity in key decision-making

Establish just processes of discernment and critical judgement when making decisions

Apply Christian stewardship to the resources and environment of the school (e.g. audit paper, water & electricity use, monitor care of equipment and facilities, implement environmentally sustainable practices)

Develop and access school-wide programs that focus on improving and maintaining quality relationships (e.g. Virtue of the Week, Making Jesus Real, Examen, peer mentoring programs, buddy programs).
Action for justice is integral to the Christian vocation. Action for justice, peace and ecological sustainability is based on the dream of Jesus to establish the Kingdom of God. School communities act for justice when they demonstrate a commitment to the poor and marginalised, actively work for peace and practise stewardship of the earth.

**Applying Catholic social teaching**

Draw on Catholic social teaching and scripture when developing a rationale and principles for social justice activities.

Critically review and monitor the complexity and expense of experiences offered by the school in light of Jesus’ model as one who ‘travels lightly’ (e.g. overseas trips, formals, excursions, fundraisers).

Implement policies and practices within the school that nurture a generosity of spirit (e.g. staff club support for a local charity, adopting a charitable cause, encourage random acts of kindness).

Promote peaceful relationships within and beyond the school community (e.g. design retreat/reflection experiences on a peace theme, celebrate World Peace Day, celebrate the lives of peace-makers, incorporate non-violent principles into school policies and procedures).

Promote the resources and activities of Catholic justice and peace agencies for prayer and action.

**Caring for the environment**

Foster environmentally friendly practices (e.g. recycling paper, composting, worm farm, installing school water tanks).

Raise awareness of ecological issues (e.g. school forums, inspiring speakers, regular updates in school communication, establish an energy efficiency working party, student debates) with reference to Church teachings.

Engage with local environmental projects as part of the curriculum.

**Learning through service**

Provide structured immersion experiences for students and staff to give valuable insight into the lives of others (e.g. street retreats, visiting care facilities, overseas immersion programs).

Design and create activities that promote better understanding between generational groups (e.g. visiting an aged care residence, interviewing an older person, Grandparents Day).

Support and encourage student-initiated justice projects that contribute to the wellbeing of others locally and globally.

Adopt a school in need and seek practical ways they might be supported (e.g. clothing, books and resources for a school in East Timor, sharing facilities with a school nearby, support schools that have been effected by natural disasters).

Enliven and renew existing service and justice activities (e.g. a ‘justice activist-in-residence’, guest presenters at school boards and staff meetings, conduct a justice hypothetical).
Reflection on action for justice

Reflection on action for justice requires critical reflection and prayerful discernment based upon the scriptures and Catholic social teaching. School communities consciously plan for and implement these reflective elements into their justice initiatives through an action-reflection process.

Promoting critical discernment

Review and critique the relevance and adequacy of current actions for justice in the school community.

Critically reflect on everyday practices within the school community that fail to uphold the dignity of individuals (e.g. demeaning language, aggressive behaviour, misuse of power).

Use school publications to challenge the school community to critically reflect on current social issues.

Encourage peaceful and just relationships by providing opportunities for community members to regularly reflect on their attitudes and behaviours.

Make reference to Catholic social teaching in areas of learning relating to social issues such as economic development, employment, consumerism, and scientific developments such as cloning.

Incorporate reflection about the vocation of the Christian in the world into the briefing and debriefing of students engaged in immersion and outreach programs.

Building a culture of reflection

Encourage reflective processes that promote reconciliation (e.g. conflict resolution, restorative justice processes, mediation).

Provide times and opportunities to assist prayerful reflection on justice issues and initiatives (e.g. journaling, meditation, artistic expression, song writing).

Ensure that prayerful reflection is part of the regular practice of service and action (e.g. Examen prayer, meditation on scripture, journaling).

Build a reflective component into the celebration of significant events related to social issues and justice (e.g. Aboriginal reconciliation, Social Justice Week, World Environment Day, Hiroshima Day).

Utilise the power of story to assist reflection on social justice issues and themes.

Locate and use resources provided by Catholic agencies to promote student reflection on issues of justice, peace and ecological sustainability.

Utilise the writings and reflections of prominent advocates for social justice as a focus of reflection on actions undertaken. Make reference to Catholic social teaching in this context.

Teach students to use an action-reflection process in response to life and societal issues.
Appendices
Appendix 1

Vision of the Archdiocese of Brisbane

Jesus Communion Mission, Archbishop John Bathersby’s vision for our growth as a healthy, vibrant, evangelising Archdiocese, has three essential dimensions calling us to:

- Embrace the person and vision of Jesus
- Build Communion with God and others
- Engage in Jesus’ Mission in our world.

If we are to experience the fullness of Christian life and have the impact in the world that Jesus Christ desires, every one of our communities, each of us as individuals, and our Archdiocese as a whole must live these three dimensions dynamically.
Vision Statement for Catholic Education in the Archdiocese of Brisbane

Embracing the Archdiocesan Vision of Jesus Communion Mission, each Catholic community, organisation and individual collaboratively engaged in the educational ministry of the Church in the Archdiocese of Brisbane is called to:

**Teach**
We promote faith in Jesus Christ, teaching and learning about Jesus, the gospel and the faith of the Catholic Christian community. Learning is lifelong, life-giving and engages the whole person.

**Challenge**
Inspired by the Holy Spirit, we challenge those we educate to live in communion with God, others and the whole of creation in prayerful, sacramental, just, peaceful, inclusive and reconciling communities.

**Transform**
We educate for a transformed world in communion, by nurturing the gifts and potential of each person, enacting shared leadership, and exercising a preferential option for the poor and the marginalised.

This vision statement was endorsed by Archbishop Bathersby in December 2004

Catholic Education Council, Archdiocese of Brisbane
I commend to parish and school communities and to Archdiocesan agencies this new Archdiocesan policy statement on The Religious Education of School-Aged Catholics. It replaces the earlier policy statement, That They May Have Life, promulgated in 1994.

That policy served well our Archdiocesan community. It provided an excellent foundation for the development of the 1997 Religious Education Guidelines for Catholic Schools and the 2003 Religious Education Years 1 – 10 Learning Outcomes and its suite of support materials. It also assisted the many developments in central and local religious education programs and provided support to Catholic students attending schools that are not part of our distinct Catholic schooling mission.

This new policy statement was developed through a wide consultation process, under the direction of the Catholic Education Council. It continued throughout 2004 and concluded in May 2005. I wish to acknowledge those working party members who assiduously brought wide ranging perspectives to their task of consultation and policy development.

I am delighted that this new policy statement is closely aligned to our Archdiocesan Synod priorities of Jesus Communion Mission. It connects well with the revised Vision Statement for Catholic Education in the Archdiocese of Brisbane. Such cohesion is important as we continue this vital and life-giving mission of educating young people who are an essential part of our Catholic community.

My hope is that this new policy statement will impact as significantly as the earlier policy did upon religious education of school-aged Catholics in the Archdiocese.

Through this policy statement may our young people, and those who minister to them, come to know Jesus deeply, experience ecclesial Communion richly, and engage in Mission creatively and energetically.

Sincerely in Christ

Most Rev John Bathersby DD
ARCHBISHOP OF BRISBANE

August 2005
POLICY

All young Catholics, throughout their school years, are provided with opportunities for religious education suited to their age, background and the changing world in which they live.

INTRODUCTION

In the baptismal ritual the faith community of the Church commits itself to assisting parents in the religious education of their children. Such religious education can take place in schools, both Catholic and other than Catholic, in parish settings and in other contexts.

‘May he soon touch your ears to receive his word, and your mouth to proclaim his faith, to the praise and glory of God.’ [Rite of Baptism]

RATIONALE

All young Catholics by virtue of their baptism enter into the communion of the Church and have an inherent right to be educated in the Catholic faith tradition. In Catholic thinking, any genuine education must address the religious dimension of life, nurture human spiritual yearning, assist young people to understand themselves in the light of the transcendent.

This policy statement is, in effect, a charter of young Catholics’ rights to be effectively supported in their faith growth through appropriate religious education.

It is imperative that all within the community of the Church proclaim the Gospel to the young in ways that they can understand, in ways that are relevant to their ecumenical and multi-faith world. (Pope John Paul II; 2001; pg 104)

The Brisbane Archdiocesan Pastoral Plan, Let Your Light Shine (2004) commits the Church to ensuring that young people are helped by a set of faith development opportunities to integrate faith with everyday experience. The Archdiocesan Vision focuses the themes of Jesus Communion Mission.

Through religious education centred on Jesus, the young person will develop as an individual, in a way appropriate to age, maturity and faith development. The young person:

- is aware of God’s presence in creation
- knows and understands God as revealed in Jesus
- grows in relationship with God
- is confirmed in belief in a personal God
- values self and others as gifted by God
- develops a relevant, life-affirming personal spirituality
- develops an informed conscience
- sees a purpose in life and hope for the future.
Through religious education centred on Communion, the young person will develop as a member of the faith community, in a way appropriate to age, maturity and faith development. The young person:

- experiences and contributes to a welcoming and vibrant faith community
- actively participates in the worship, faith life and outreach of the faith community
- knows and values the Catholic Christian heritage and the faith heritage of others
- values and reflects on religious experience in an ecumenical and multi-faith world.

Through religious education centred on Mission, the young person will develop as a Christian in society, in a way appropriate to age, maturity and faith development. The young person:

- responds faithfully to the life and teaching of Jesus Christ in everyday living
- lives an ethical life guided by the values of the Gospel and the teaching of the Church
- critiques society and its structures in the light of the Gospel and Catholic social teaching
- acts for justice, peace and ecological sustainability in our world.

CONSEQUENCES

Religious Educators in the Archdiocese will:

- affirm and support parents / care givers in their primary role as the first educators of their children in the faith
- align religious education with Archdiocesan Vision, policies and guidelines
- develop, implement and review quality religious education in Catholic schools, state schools and parishes
- support and develop learning opportunities for religious educators
- include ecumenical and multi-faith perspectives in the religious education of young people
- comply with government and archdiocesan requirements

References


Rite of Baptism

Catholic Education Council

For more information please contact the Catholic Education Council
GPO Box
Telephone (07) 3033 7000
Fax (07 3844 5101
This policy statement on learning and teaching reflects the ongoing commitment of Catholic Education in furthering our Archdiocesan Vision of *Jesus Communion Mission* through the education ministry of the Church.

In our Catholic tradition the desire for knowledge is a lifelong endeavour. Catholic schools provide a curriculum that nurtures ‘a love of learning and inquiry, offers a multiplicity of learning experiences, promotes ethical and lifelong learning, and above all fosters learning that leads to wisdom’. (Queensland Catholic Schools and Curriculum, 2008, pg 10)

The policy reminds us that learning and teaching are not simply for individuals but for the common good as well. They promote interaction that empowers members of our community each day to bear witness to God’s presence.

*A Catholic school is not simply a place where lessons are taught; it is a centre that has an operative educational philosophy, attentive to the needs of today’s youth, and illuminated by the gospel message.* (The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School n.22)

This policy is directed at all who work for Catholic Education and provides a clear reminder that we value learning and teaching because of their transformative, purposeful, holistic, creative and engaging power. Quality learning and teaching leads our students to hope in God and to offer committed service to others.

I commend this policy statement to those involved in Catholic schooling in this Archdiocese. I offer my heartfelt thanks for this important, life-giving ministry of the Church.

*Sincerely in Christ*

[Signature]

**Most Rev John Bathersby DD**

ARCHBISHOP OF BRISBANE

June 2008
POLICY

Learning and teaching in Catholic schools empowers all learners in our community to understand, shape and enrich our changing world, by living the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

INTRODUCTION

All in Catholic schools are invited to engage in the mission of the Church in the world through daily active living of the Gospel. This encourages learning that is transformative, within personal, communal and societal contexts.

Learners bring with them rich life experiences and diverse religious, social and cultural backgrounds. Our schools offer a vibrant and relevant curriculum which respects this life experience and diversity, recognising that “every learner is in some respect like all others, like some others and like no other”. Schools assist learners to make meaning of their world.

Teachers assist students to learn by providing creative and engaging opportunities for all. They nurture constructive partnerships with parents and others to provide high quality learning within a safe and supportive educational environment.

RATIONALE

Church documentation reminds us that the Catholic school’s task is fundamentally a synthesis of culture and faith, and a synthesis of faith and life; the first is reached by integrating all the different aspects of human knowledge through the subjects taught, in the light of the Gospel: the second in the growth of the virtues characteristic of the Christian. (CS n 37)

Within a Catholic school the cultural and religious dimensions of learning are interrelated. This relationship between contemporary culture and the Catholic Christian tradition can be both harmonious and in productive tension. Collectively they promote in students the bringing together of culture, faith and life.

This approach to learning and teaching fosters coherence and a connected, meaningful understanding of reality. Students are formed and informed in the light of the Catholic Christian tradition. They will be taught by knowledgeable, skilful and caring teachers who facilitate quality learning. Students are challenged to become life-long learners and active, engaged and ethical citizens.

Learning and teaching in Catholic schools relies on teachers who are:

- well formed in their vocation as a Christian and in their ministry of teaching
- growing and maturing, personally, professionally and religiously
- positive in their disposition towards young people and their families
- continually reflecting upon and enhancing their pedagogy.
Learning and teaching in Catholic schools is informed by:

- the educational vision, mission and policies of the Archdiocese and of the school
- contemporary educational research and practices
- the needs and the aspirations of students, their families and the local community
- the knowledge and skills of teachers and others
- the requirements of Government educational policies and directions.

**CONSEQUENCES**

In enacting this policy our community of schools in partnership with families and others will promote:

**LEARNING** characterised by

- active engagement of teachers and students
- students demonstrating what they know and can do
- frequent and explicit feedback on progress
- high aspirations, personal discipline and intellectual rigor
- individual and collaborative activities
- reflection and self direction.

**TEACHING** characterised by

- a response to the diverse range of learners and learning styles
- practice that is contemporary, innovative and well informed
- respect for the Catholic Christian tradition
- catering for diverse range of learners and learning
- explicit, focused instruction
- collaborative professional learning.

**LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS** characterised by

- the Catholic Christian identity of the school
- quality facilities and resources
- aesthetics that encourage prayer, reflection and creativity
- responsiveness to the needs of students and teachers
- a safe, supporting and nurturing educational environment.

**COLLABORATION** characterised by

- strong partnerships between parents, teachers and students
- key partnerships both within and beyond the school
- interactive and quality engagement with the local church and wider community
- quality interactive processes.
GLOSSARY

Pedagogy

Pedagogy is the reciprocal, interactive, and dynamic process between teaching and learning. It is what goes on everyday in great classrooms.


REFERENCES


i The term Catholic in this policy is also inclusive of the three Ecumenical schools supported and administered through Catholic Education in the Archdiocese of Brisbane to which this policy also applies.

ii Adapted from the Overarching Goal for Learning, Brisbane Catholic Education Learning Framework, Brisbane 2002.


iv The term others is inclusive of support staff within the school, community agencies and other educational providers which support the student.


Appendix 5 - Glossary of Terms

Charism
Charisms are extraordinary gifts or graces of the Holy Spirit given to individuals for the good of others. Saint Paul lists nine of these graces (1 Corinthians 12: 4-11). Particular charisms are often associated with the work and identity of religious institutes and are given expression in the identity and life of schools.

Consumerism
An inordinate attachment to materialistic values and to material goods and possessions.

Counter cultural
A way of living and a system of values that are in contrast to those of the dominant culture.

Ecclesial
Relating to the nature, members, structure and mission of the Church.

Ecumenical
Relating to the spiritual understanding and unity of Christians and their Churches.

Ethos
is the underlying sentiment that informs the beliefs, customs, or practices of a group or society. In a Catholic schooling context, ethos refers to the values, beliefs and traditions founded on the gospel and embedded in the everyday life and culture of the school.

Evangelising mission
The evangelising mission of the Church is essentially the ongoing proclamation of God’s love, mercy and forgiveness revealed to humankind through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Examen
is a form of prayerful review of one’s life and actions developed by St Ignatius of Loyola. It involves five steps of thanksgiving, intention, examination, contrition and hope.

Imprimatur
This is an official approval by a diocesan authority to publish a book or pamphlet. This occurs for catechetical works, theological texts and works dealing with Sacred Scripture according to canon law.

Inculturation
The process involving experience, observation and instruction through which individuals learn their group’s culture and are socialised into that culture.

Individualism
A belief that all actions are determined by, or at least take place for, the benefit of the individual, rather than for the benefit of society as a whole.

Intercultural understanding
The ability to participate, negotiate and interact with people from a variety of cultural contexts through a knowledge and understanding of one’s own culture and the cultures of others.

Lectio Divina
means divine reading and is a way of reading the scriptures as prayer. There are four stages, lectio (reading), meditatio (reflection), oratio (response) and contemplatio (rest).

Liturgy of the Hours
Also called The Divine Office, the Liturgy of the Hours is made up of Morning Prayer, Prayer Before Noon, Prayer During the Day, Evening Prayer and Night Prayer.
Ministry
Most simply, ministry means to render service for the good of others. Christian ministry is based on the ministry of Jesus Christ. Catholics make a distinction between the ordained ministry of those who have received the Sacrament of Holy Orders and the ministry of other baptised Christians who may be formally commissioned to minister in the name of the Church or may exercise an informal ministry of Christian service to others.

Moral relativism
is the philosophical view that ethical standards, morality and positions of right and wrong are socially, culturally or historically based, and have no foundation in a universal point of truth.

Religious iconography
The study and interpretation of the traditional representations of sacred symbols in art as found in mosaics, statues, and pictures. Many of the scenes from the Bible and legends of the saints that decorate the walls and ceilings of Christian churches have historical as well as doctrinal importance.

Restorative justice
gives priority to reconciliation and the restoration of right relationships in the community rather than to judgement and punishment.

Sacramentality
The principle of sacramentality is the belief that we encounter God’s presence through all the events and experiences of life.

Service learning
is a method of teaching through which students apply their knowledge and skills to experience and serve real-life needs in the broader community.

Social justice
is that aspect of justice which urges the individual member of the social group to seek the common good of the whole group rather than just their own individual good.

Stewardship
The religious conviction that the earth and its resources are gifts from God entrusted to the care of every human person.

Subsidiarity
A principle of Catholic social teaching which states that a community of a higher order should not interfere in the internal life of a community of a lower order, depriving the latter of its rightful responsibility.

Triune God
A central doctrine of the Christian faith affirms that there are three persons in the one God – Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
Selected References


Catholic Education, Archdiocese of Brisbane (2005), *Celebration and Challenge.*


Catholic Education, Archdiocese of Brisbane, (1998), *Catholic Schools, Why We Have Them.*


Pope Paul VI (1963), *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy.*

Pope Paul VI (1965), *Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity – Apostolicam Actuositatem– Second Vatican Council (1965).*


Guidelines for the Religious Life of the School

Notes

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