Melbourne Archdiocese
Catholic Schools

Pastoral Care Policy for MACS Schools

Introduction

Pastoral care is a demonstration of profound respect for the human dignity of each person who is created in the image and likeness of God (Genesis 1: 26–27). This call to respect each person is inspired by the sacred Scriptures and brought to life by the person of Jesus Christ.

Jesus' life and teachings show all people 'the way, the truth and the life' (John 14: 6), inviting each to fullness (John 10:10). 'Throughout the Gospel, Jesus illuminates for us how we are called to live out our mission, approach our work and conduct our relationships with love, hope, dignity, compassion and forgiveness' (eXcel: Wellbeing for learning in Catholic school communities, 2018, p.4).

The Church's teachings are central to the moral, legal and mission driven responsibility of all Catholic schools to create nurturing environments where children and young people are respected, their voices heard and where they are safe and feel safe. This is particularly so for the most vulnerable children, recognising that some children and young people are more vulnerable than others, and Melbourne Archdiocese Catholic Schools Ltd (MACS) commits to providing the care and services required to support them and their families, and to ensure their safety within all Catholic schools (CECV Commitment Statement to Child Safety).

In Catholic schools, all relationships, including those with students, staff and parents/guardians/carers, are built on unconditional positive regard. Every person has a responsibility to understand the integral role they play, individually and collectively. For adults in Catholic schools, nurturing the pastoral care, wellbeing and safety of all children and young people is at the forefront of all that they do and every decision that they make.

'Pastoral care' is brought to life in Catholic school communities through the actions, interactions and attitudes of all community members. It is evident in the school's vision and mission statements, policies, procedures, curriculum, student support services and partnerships with parents, who are the first educators of their children (General Directory for Catechesis 226 & 227).

Purpose

This policy documents strategies for creating and maintaining a culture in MACS' schools which is culturally safe, and which ensures that children and young people are known, and feel safe, valued and respected. The policy articulate strategies and practices that:

- develop and enhance every student's wellbeing and sense of connectedness and belonging to their school as a faith-filled learning community
- cultivate safe, physical, emotional, mental, social and online environments that comply with relevant legislative and legal requirements
- ensure that the diverse and unique identities and experiences of Aboriginal children, young people and students are respected and valued.

Scope

This policy applies in all MACS schools, including specialist schools operated by Melbourne Archdiocese Specialist Schools Ltd (MACSS) and school boarding premises operated by MACS schools.

Principles

Pastoral care in MACS school communities:

- involves a commitment to creating safe, supportive, inclusive and hope-filled learning environments of welcome where human dignity is respected, diversity and inclusiveness are valued and authentic relationships are fostered
- nurtures the wellbeing of every child in a MACS school, 'their unique story, giftedness and temperament must be understood and valued in a way that enables love, respect, compassion, forgiveness and hope to thrive' (Horizons of Hope: Wellbeing, 2017, p.3)
- ensures that all members of the school community are responsible for creating a positive pastoral climate. Staff, students and parents/guardians/carers share responsibility for developing and maintaining open and cooperative relationships characterised by respect, trust, goodwill and a willingness to engage collaboratively. It is vital that all members of the school community work together to provide a consistent and supportive environment in which students may develop and grow towards maturity
- identifies and nurtures partnerships with appropriate services and agencies to support the pastoral care and wellbeing needs of every student
- responds to the pastoral and wellbeing needs of students and maintains appropriate confidentiality and privacy. Information is communicated, with necessary permissions, to those who have a right or a need to be informed, either legally or pastorally.

Policy

MACS demonstrates effective pastoral care through the following strategies.

1. MACS supports schools to develop their pastoral care and wellbeing strategies by:

1.1. Providing coherent policy frameworks, guidance, and resources

1.2. Developing targeted professional learning

1.3. Monitoring compliance through existing protocols including cyclical review as part of school improvement and Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority (VRQA) requirements.

2. MACS schools are bound to provide a safe and nurturing environment where the risk of harm is minimised, and students feel safe.

2.1. School communities are required to take reasonable and proportionate measures to provide safe and enabling learning environments which encompass the spiritual, mental, physical and emotional wellbeing of the student.

2.2. The mission, vision, philosophy, programs and policies promote actions and behaviours to ensure the pastoral care, inclusion, safety and wellbeing of all students.

3. Principals and school leaders enhance their school's pastoral care and wellbeing by:

3.1. Utilising the Pastoral Care of Students Policy for MACS schools, Horizons of Hope education framework, eXcel: Wellbeing for learning in Catholic school communities, Identity and growth: A perspective for Catholic schools and the Australian Student Wellbeing Framework as the basis to inform and guide their curriculum planning, policies, procedures and practices.

3.2. Supporting staff, through appropriate professional learning, to strengthen their understanding of core Catholic principles including the sanctity of human life and the inherent dignity of the human person

3.3. Engaging students and their parents/guardians/carers to collaboratively develop and periodically review practices

3.4. Ensuring whole-school approaches are known, understood and readily accessible to all members of the community.

4. Teachers and school staff support the pastoral care and wellbeing of students by:

4.1. Creating and maintaining safe, inclusive and respectful learning environments that enable the unique potential, gifts and innate qualities of each child to unfold and thrive

4.2. Understanding their duty of care and accountability regarding legislation and compliance (including *Ministerial Order 1359*)

4.3. Using relationship-based approaches to establish consistent expectations for behaviour

4.4. Working in partnership with parents/guardians/carers and families to build resilience and promote a positive sense of self.

5. **Students contribute to developing positive pastoral learning environments and their own and other's wellbeing by:**
   5.1. Treating all members of the school community with respect and courtesy
   5.2. Following school policies, procedures and guidelines
   5.3. Taking responsibility for their actions
   5.4. Reporting all concerns about wellbeing and safety
   5.5. Co-operating with teachers, school staff and their parents/guardians/carers.

6. **Parents/guardians/carers contribute to developing positive pastoral learning environments for their own and other children's wellbeing by:**
   6.1. Working respectfully, collaboratively and in partnership with staff and members of the school community to create high expectations
   6.2. Explicitly teaching, modelling, and promoting socially responsible behaviours
   6.3. Promoting and upholding the core values of the school by supporting school policies and procedures.

Roles, responsibilities and reporting

Role	Responsibility	Reporting requirement (if applicable)
Principal	Publish each policy, procedure, form, and notice prescribed under the Care, Safety and Welfare of Students Framework	Annual attestation to the Executive Director

Definitions

Catholic Education Commission of Victoria Ltd (CECV)

The overarching, strategic-planning and policy-making body for the Catholic school system in Victoria, including MACS schools.

Child safety

Child safety encompasses matters related to protecting all children from child abuse, managing the risk of child abuse, providing support to a child at risk of child abuse, and responding to suspicions, incidents, disclosures or allegations of child abuse (Ministerial Order No. 1359).

Framework

A board-approved overarching governance structure to enable compliance by MACS and its subsidiaries and MACS schools with a range of regulatory requirements, and to ensure good governance in the operations of MACS and its subsidiaries and MACS schools.

Guidelines

Recommendations and guidance to support the implementation of a policy or procedure. Guidelines are not mandatory and may be developed and approved by a MACS director or a principal/director in a MACS school for operation in a particular school.

Inclusion

The right to access and receive a full and engaging education.

MACS schools welcome all members of the community as equal, embracing diversity as a means for dialogue, engagement and deeper understandings of self, others and God. The uniqueness and sacred dignity of each person is celebrated, driven by the Gospel message of love and justice. These convictions guide the encounters, actions and pedagogical approaches that enable all children to learn and thrive.

MACS school or school

A school which operates with the consent of the Catholic Archbishop of Melbourne and is owned, operated and governed by MACS, directly or through MACSS (as the context requires). References to schools or MACS schools also includes boarding premises of schools operated by MACS and specialist schools operated by MACSS.

Melbourne Catholic Archdiocese Schools Ltd (MACS)

MACS is a reference to Melbourne Archdiocese Catholic Schools Ltd, and/or its subsidiaries (as the context requires).

Melbourne Archdiocese Catholic Specialist Schools Ltd (MACSS)

Melbourne Archdiocese Catholic Specialist Schools Ltd, a wholly owned subsidiary of MACS established to conduct and operate specialist schools.

Pastoral care

A demonstration of profound respect for the human dignity of each person who is created in the image and likeness of God.

Pastoral care includes the decisions, structures and practices that nurture, support and assist a student to flourish and reach their spiritual, physical, cognitive, social and emotional potential so that they may come to a deeper understanding of their own humanness. The pastoral care of students in MACS schools is focused on actions that promote health, wellbeing, resilience, academic outcomes, social capital and ethical decision making (Cross, 2014).

Policy

A high-level, principles-based directive that must be complied with across MACS and its subsidiaries.

Principal

Individual appointed by MACS as principal in a MACS school.

Procedure

A step-by-step or detailed instruction for the implementation of MACS policy that is mandatory across MACS and its subsidiaries.

School environment

Means any of the following physical, online or virtual places used during or outside school/service hours:

- a campus of the school
- online or virtual school environments made available or authorised by MACS school for use by a child or student (including email, intranet systems, software, applications, collaboration tools and online services)
- other locations provided by the school or through a third-party provider for a child or student to use including, but not limited to, locations used for camps, approved homestay accommodation, delivery of education and training, sporting events, excursions, competitions, and other events (MO 1359).

School staff

Means an individual working in a school environment who is:

- directly engaged or employed by a school governing authority
- a contracted service provider engaged by MACS (whether or not a body corporate and whether or not any other person is an intermediary) engaged to perform child-related work for a MACS school
- a minister of religion, a religious leader or an employee or officer of a religious body associated with MACS (Ministerial Order No. 1359).

Student

Student means a person who is enrolled at or attends a MACS school.

Student wellbeing

A sustainable state of positive mood and attitude, resilience, and satisfaction with self, relationships, and experiences at school (Noble & Wyatt, 2008, p.21).

In MACS school settings, a positive sense of pastoral care and wellbeing supports a base for rich learning that enables children and young people to flourish, give expression to their authentic selves and realise their unique potential. This holistic view recognises the sacredness, dignity, and giftedness of each person (Horizons of Hope: Wellbeing, 2017, p.3).

Related policies and documents

Related MACS policies and documents

Anti-Bullying Policy (including cyberbullying)
Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy
Pastoral Care of Students Relating to Gender Policy
Student Behaviour Policy
eXcel: Wellbeing for learning in Catholic school communities
Horizons of Hope: Vision and Context
Horizons of Hope: Wellbeing
Horizons of Hope: Learning Diversity
Horizons of Hope: Families as Partners
Identity and growth: A perspective for Catholic schools

Resources

Australian Student Wellbeing Framework (2018)
Student Wellbeing Hub

Legislation and standards

Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 (Vic.)
Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (Vic.)
Education and Training Reform Act 2006 (Vic.)
Information Privacy Act 2000 (Vic.)
Privacy Act 1988 (Vic.)
Worker Screening Act 2020 (Vic.)

Policy information

Responsible director	Director, Learning and Regional Services
Policy owner	General Manager, Student Wellbeing
Approving authority	Executive Director
Assigned board committee	Child Safety and Risk Management
Approval date	October 2023
Risk Rating	High
Date of next review	March 2025
Publication	CEVN, MACS website

POLICY DATABASE INFORMATION	
Assigned framework	Care, Safety and Welfare of Students
Supporting documents	See list of supporting documents and related policies above
Superseded documents	MACS Pastoral Care of Students Policy – v2.0 – 2022 MACS Pastoral Care of Students Policy – v1.0 – 2022
New policy	