

PASTORAL CARE POLICY

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MISSION STATEMENT:

We at St. Joseph's Catholic School Pinjarra, seek to create a God centred environment where each school community member is nurtured spiritually, academically, socially and physically.

DEFINING PASTORAL CARE:

There are many definitions used to describe and define pastoral care. The all-encompassing nature of pastoral care makes it very difficult to adequately define in just a sentence or two. Kevin Treston's book *Pastoral Care For Schools* (1998) provides a good definition that will be used as the basis for developing a model and policy of Pastoral Care in our school.

Pastoral care is the integration of the academic, social and religious dimensions of a school's energy so that an atmosphere of care prevails within the school community.

Pastoral care is the summation of the school's endeavour to educate. It is integral to the daily life of the school and cannot be restricted to a particular program or curriculum.

Pastoral care is a comprehensive concept, which embraces the total life of the school by contributing to the realisation of gifts within each person and a commitment to the wellbeing of Society. (Treston 1989 p.5)

RATIONALE:

At St. Joseph's our Mission Statement serves as a core focus in all that we do and plan. It is from our desire to provide a nurturing environment not just for students but also for staff and families as well, that our need for a pastoral care policy and model stems. Our policy and model of pastoral care is also designed to complement and support the principles set forth in the *Framework for the Development of Pastoral Care in Catholic Schools* by the Catholic Education Office. This need for pastoral care is perhaps best summed up in the opening statement of the Framework.

Pastoral Care in a Catholic School is informed by and given its spirit by the school's place as part of the evangelical ministry of the Church. The Catholic school is in essence the face of Christ for its whole community and its pastoral role needs to infuse every aspect of its operation and its relationships. (Catholic Education Office of WA. 1998, p1)

Parents are the first educators of their children. The role of the Catholic school is to assist parents in the Catholic education of their children. Each school needs to appreciate the special pastoral circumstances of its own community, including families, and then to mobilise the resources, personnel and programmes needed to meet those pastoral needs. (Framework for the Development of Pastoral Care in Catholic Schools p.1)

As stated in the Framework there are two aspects to pastoral care which need to be acknowledged. Firstly there is an explicit dimension in which the school sets out specific ways in which it seeks to address the pastoral needs of its community members. This component deals with the specialist programs, structures and personnel that the school puts in place to meet those needs. Secondly there is an implicit dimension to pastoral care which means that it cannot be restricted to just administrative or curriculum areas but instead must permeate every aspect of the school's operation.

Within our school, appropriate learning opportunities can serve to reduce the stresses of the educational process. As such we endeavour to promote a sense of purpose and self-worth in our students in an effort to strengthen the young person in coping with the pressures of society.

The mission statement is at the core of all policy development and is the focus for all change and implementation. From the mission statement there are key policies that have an impact on how our school operates. These policies that have specific roles to play in establishing and maintaining a caring school environment and as such have a direct bearing on pastoral care. These policies are:

1. Religious Education Policy
2. Bullying Policy
3. Behaviour Management Policy
4. Crisis Management Policy
5. Harassment Policy
6. Occupational Health and Safety Policy
7. Pastoral Care Policy

These policies have specific areas of impact in terms of addressing our duty of care to, and pastoral needs of, all school community members. Together these policies combine and overlap to produce a model of pastoral care that attempts to cater for all individual and group needs.

Religious Education Policy:

The Religious Education Guidelines implemented throughout the school offers numerous opportunities for teachers to exercise pastoral care of their students. Through prayer, discussion, reflection, meditation and other activities the children can come to know themselves better as people. Through this they can come to know God better and develop their relationship with Him. Religious Education provides many opportunities for teachers to improve the self-esteem of children and have a positive impact on their sense of self.

Bullying Policy:

Our school will not tolerate bullying. We want our school to be a place where children feel safe and comfortable and not threatened in any way. This policy aims to put in place procedures to enable the identification of both bullies and victims. Therefore appropriate

action can be taken to ensure that bullies are given consequences for their actions as well as counselling and behaviour modification programs to help prevent future occurrences. Victims can also be given counselling and strategies to avoid becoming victims in the future, as well as help to boost self-esteem.

Behaviour Management Policy:

The Behaviour Management Policy has obvious implications across all aspects of the school. Its aim is to help create an environment that allows children to maximise the opportunity to learn without undue interference or distraction from others. The Behaviour Management Policy also aims to allow teachers to maximise the opportunity for learning to take place through their planning and implementation of quality learning experiences, whilst minimising the interruptions and distractions of unacceptable behaviour from students. The Behaviour Management policy is based upon an assertive discipline approach that sets clear and simple expectations in terms of acceptable and unacceptable behaviour. There is at both the class and whole school level a corresponding system of rewards and consequences for those who follow or infringe the rules. A crucial aspect of the Behaviour Management Policy is the counselling and programs put in place to help both students and parents to modify unacceptable behaviours so that the student can experience success and rewards offered by the system.

Crisis Management Policy:

This policy is designed to provide an action plan that can be implemented in the event of an emergency or crisis situation developing. Examples of such situations would include the abduction of a child from the school grounds, one or two children involved in a traffic accident on the way to or from school, a school bus crash, a serious accident at school and a serious accident on camp or on an excursion. The crisis may involve only one or two students or it may involve one or more classes. As part of our duty of care and concern for the pastoral needs of our school community this policy outlines specific roles and courses of action for staff to follow in the event of such a situation arising. The aim of the policy is to give staff clear guidelines to follow which will enable the crisis to be dealt with in an efficient, caring and calm manner. This will benefit not only the students but also the staff and parents effected by such traumatic events. An integral part of the policy is to keep all parties involved up to date with clear channels of communication.

Harassment Policy:

The Harassment Policy sets out clear guidelines for staff and parents in terms of what behaviours are deemed acceptable and not acceptable in interactions between staff members and also between staff and parents. The aim is to promote an environment free from any form of verbal, racial, sexual and physical harassment or any other form of discrimination. All members of the school community have the right to feel that they will be able to interact with others without feeling harassed in any way.

Occupational Health and Safety:

This policy aims to put in place guidelines and procedures to safeguard the health, safety and welfare of all staff, parents and students whilst on the school grounds or involved in school activities off-site. There are obvious legislative requirements that need to be adhered to in relation to this policy, however, we also see it as being very important in terms of caring pastorally for those who are involved with the school. Our aim is to provide a safe and

healthy work environment where the risk of accident and injury is minimalised through a proactive program of inspection, maintenance and planning.

The above policies all inter-relate and overlap with each other. They all contribute in their way to our efforts to provide a caring, Christian environment which nurtures the development of all aspects of the individual. Underpinning these policies and detailing some of our more explicit efforts to provide pastoral care is the Pastoral Care Policy.

PASTORAL CARE POLICY:

The Pastoral Care Policy outlines specific programs and initiatives designed to cater for the implicit and explicit needs of our school community members.

PRINCIPLES:

The function of Pastoral Care in Catholic Schools, as outlined in the *Framework for Development of Pastoral Care in Catholic Schools*, is to:

1. Provide an environment, a curriculum and a set of practices based on the Gospels. Catholic education draws from approaches that understand a school to be a community committed to the students' development as fully integrated people through educational means.
2. Enable students to attain the beliefs, values, attitudes, knowledge, skills and practices which will enable them to achieve Christ's vision of the human person. Every Catholic school community's concern will be students' integrated development as Christian men and women as responsible, inner-directed individuals of Christian virtue, capable of free choice and of making value judgements enlightened by a formed Christian consciences.
3. Ensure that the care and development of each person takes place within the Catholic faith community. In the school, students should see Christian values actively lived rather than merely spoken of, and experience them in sincere interpersonal relationships.
4. Be concerned with the nurturing and well-being of all who impact on the school community. A school's pastoral dimension will show itself in the mutual care and support administrators and staff show towards each other, as well as through the care they all show for their students. From the pastoral dimension of the total school life, students learn their own value and dignity.

(Catholic Education Office of WA. 1998, p1)

AIMS:

1. To instil a sense of family atmosphere and Catholic community.
2. To develop a caring environment where respect, understanding and support is nurtured amongst adults and children alike.
3. To integrate specific pastoral care programmes into the daily life of our school.

STRATEGIES:

The strategies to be used to implement the Pastoral Care Policy will vary from time to time depending on the circumstances and needs of individuals or groups. The key is to be flexible in terms of the programs, initiatives and structures that are put in place. For Pastoral Care to be effective it must incorporate flexibility also in terms of pace of delivery and duration. The following programs and initiatives are by no means exhaustive and are listed to merely represent some of the range of options that are implemented to meet our needs. The strategies have been grouped into three distinct areas, depending on their target recipients.

Students:

- Peer Support program – creates buddies between older students in Years Six & Seven and younger students in Pre-Primary & Year One. Younger children have increased confidence in the playground through knowing some of the older children whom they can turn to for help.
- Collaborative Learning Strategies – through the teaching of social skills necessary for the approach to work, children benefit from greater cooperation skills, better listening skills and an improved ability to work and get along with their peers. All children can experience success and lessen their fears of failure.
- “Seasons For Growth” – Grief counselling course which can be used for children who have undergone trauma such as marriage breakdown, separation or death in the family.
- Retreats and Camps – can provide opportunities for children to develop closer relationships with each other and with staff through less formal contact, social activities and team building activities.
- Religious Education Guidelines – provide opportunities for children to discuss issues, share ideas and thoughts, personal reflection time, meditation, develop a sense of self and self-worth and recognise their gifts and talents.
- Fruits of the Holy Spirit and Bucket Fillers – both of these programs provide students and staff acknowledge the goodness in members of our school community.
- KidsMatter - provides schools with an overarching framework, evidence-based strategies, planning tools and professional learning resources to assist them to take a planned, strategic, whole-school approach to improving the mental health and wellbeing of their children and young people. This approach has been shown to be most effective when it involves all school staff, parents and carers, the wider school community and support agencies in:
 - Strengthening the protective factors and minimising the risk factors that impact on student’s mental health and wellbeing
 - Establishing a planned approach to the promotion of positive mental health, prevention of difficulties, and provision of early intervention for students experiencing mental health difficulties.

Staff:

- Induction Program – designed to assist new staff and graduate teachers to settle into the school and become familiar with policies, procedures and expectations.
- Mentoring Program – can be implemented to assist teachers to renew their skills or give support to a staff member struggling to cope with some aspect of their work.
- Appraisal Process – designed to be an affirming process by recognising the excellent work of classroom teachers and acknowledging such efforts.
- Professional Development – staff members are allocated a number of personal professional development days for the year, to allow them to cater for their own needs. These days are supplementary to any whole school requirements for professional development.
- Communication Network and Procedures – are designed to ensure that all staff members are fully informed of latest information and do not feel “left out”. This is a critical area of school operations in terms of keeping staff morale up.
- Social Activities – are planned on a term basis to give staff the opportunity to mix socially and develop friendships outside of the normal work environment. Some are more planned and others very impromptu.
- Retreats – are generally held every second year to facilitate staff personal faith development. These are opportunities to get away from school to a different setting and unwind, pray, reflect, meditate and receive some input from outside speakers on various topics determined by surveying staff.
- Personal Faith Development Days – usually organised for a pupil free day and similar to retreats except that they occur at school.
- Counselling – available to all staff through several agencies such as the Parish Priest, Catholic Education Office and privately employed specialists on a needs basis. (ACCESS: 1300 66 77 00)
- Staff Prayer – held weekly on a rostered basis. This allows staff to share their faith and spirituality with others. It also provides the opportunity for staff to experience a wide variety of prayer experiences.
- School Liturgies – allow the staff the opportunity to be creative in the planning of such liturgies as well as providing the opportunity to worship as a staff and celebrate the Eucharist together as a staff.

Parents:

- Parent Information Evenings/ Parent – Teacher meetings – to enable parents to meet their children’s teachers and establish a relationship based upon an understanding of the teacher’s expectations and hopes for the class during the year.
- New Parent Orientation Evenings – to meet with families new to the school and familiarise them with school procedures, policies and the layout of the school. It is also an opportunity to meet with teachers and visit classrooms during normal daily routine.

- P&F Social Functions – play an important role in helping new families to meet other parents in a social setting. Also provides social interaction for single parent families whose burden is often such that they have reduced opportunities for socialising. Helps to create a sense of community and spirit of friendliness.
- Interviews – Staff / Parent – parents are encouraged to arrange an interview at any time of the year to discuss their child’s progress or their concerns. This is seen as a vital part of the overall communication process so vital to fostering good pastoral care.
- Assemblies – provide an opportunity for the school community to come together and share news, present awards to students and be entertained by class items. This is an integral part of coming together as a school community to share our successes and encourage the students. Each class presents one assembly per year. Parents are invited to share morning tea after these assemblies.
- Open Days/ Learning Journeys – are held to allow parents and the wider community to visit the school and see the classes in action. Assists greatly in breaking down barriers and making parents and others feel comfortable coming up to the school.
- Class Masses and Prayer Services – provide an opportunity for families to come together to celebrate the Eucharist and build that sense of community and belonging.
- School Masses and Prayer Services – again assist to build community and faith by allowing the whole school community to celebrate together and assist in meeting the spiritual needs of individuals and families.
- Newsletters – are the vital link between school and home on a fortnightly basis. Newsletters are important for communicating news and information to parents at home. They allow busy parents to stay in touch with what is happening at school and avoid feeling isolated. The newsletter is also available on the school website.
- Special School Celebrations – are an invaluable means of bringing the whole school community together and uniting them for a common purpose or focus. In a multitude of formats they can be engineered to cater for or focus on some aspect of pastoral care within the school.
- School Website – provides families with all current details and information pertaining to the school. This includes weekly newsletters, policies, photos and class displays www.stjoespinjarra.wa.edu.au