

# PASTORAL CARE FRAMEWORK

AN INTEGRATED WHOLE-SCHOOL APPROACH TO PASTORAL CARE AND WELLBEING



Catholic Schools Office  
Diocese of Lismore





## 1. SCOPE

The purpose of this Framework is to guide parish school communities as they implement the Catholic Schools Office Pastoral Care Policy within their own contexts. The Framework provides a broad overview of the dynamic, interrelated nature of pastoral care including key dimensions that shape the human dignity and support the wellbeing of every member of the school community, especially the student.

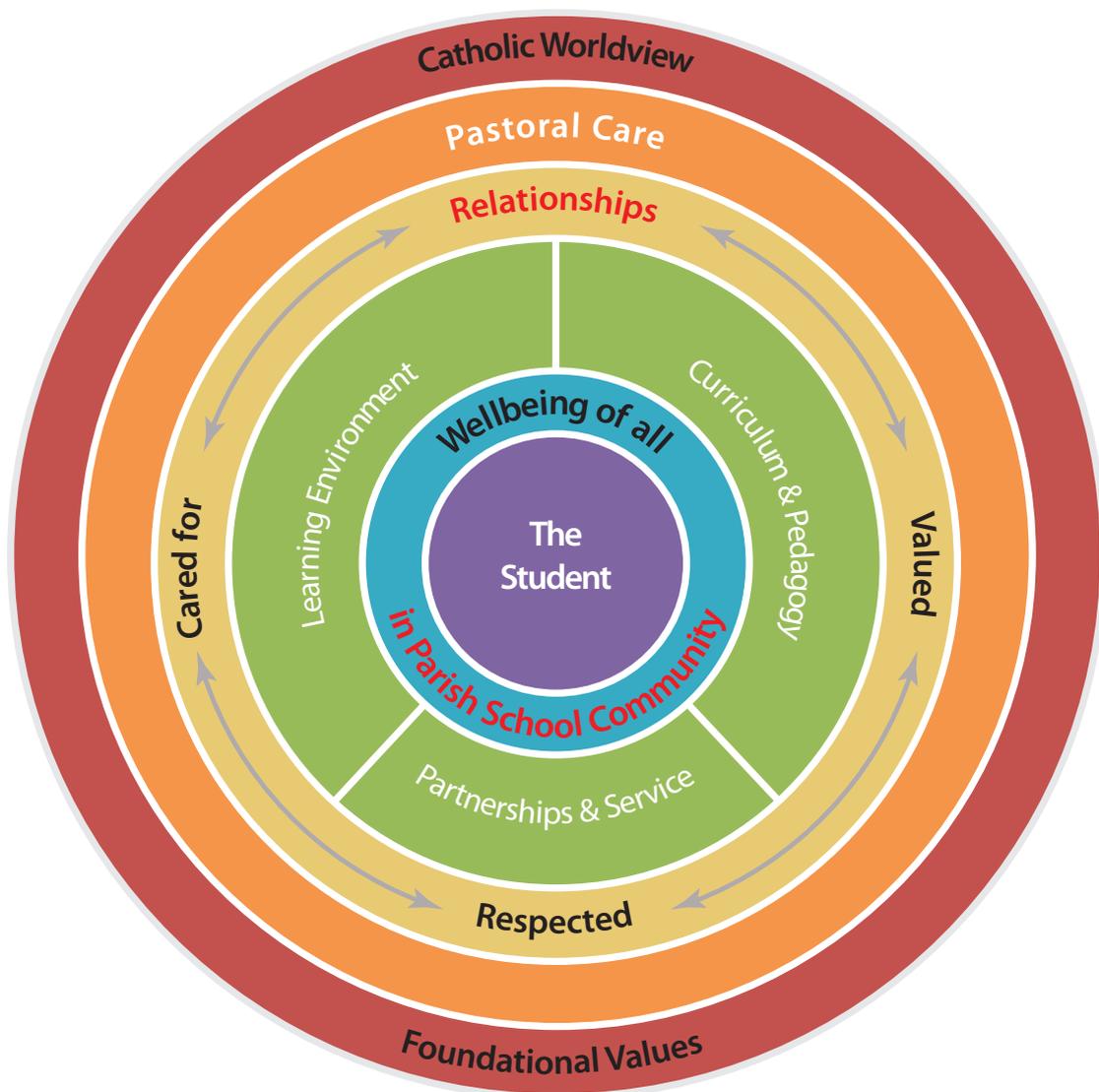
## 2. THE BASIC PRINCIPLES OF PASTORAL CARE

The following Principles underpin and permeate an agreed understanding of Pastoral Care that enhances the wellbeing of all persons involved in Catholic education within the Diocese of Lismore:

1. Pastoral Care is founded in Jesus Christ and the Gospel imperative that every person, particularly the students we serve in Catholic schools, might be enabled to achieve the fullness of life (John 10:10).
2. Pastoral Care is concerned with the inherent dignity and wellbeing of each person.
3. Pastoral Care in Catholic schools is infused by the Catholic Worldview and nurtured through a life of prayer and sacramental living.
4. Pastoral Care is the concern of each person involved in Catholic education, under the leadership of the school Principal.
5. Pastoral Care is enacted through, and embedded within, reciprocal relationships – including student-teacher; student-student; teacher-teacher; principal-teacher; parent-teacher, priest-student; priest-teacher and other relationships.
6. Pastoral relationships incorporate dimensions of authentic recognition in which every individual experiences being cared for, respected and valued.
7. Parents play a key role in Pastoral Care and schools work closely and collaboratively with them in promoting the wellbeing of students.
8. Pastoral Care and wellbeing is critically dependent on student participation, which means creating opportunities for students to have a voice in matters that concern them at school.
9. Pastoral Care is embedded within and across *all* domains of school life.
10. Pastoral Care promotes and enhances wellbeing - including spiritual, social, emotional, psychological, intellectual and physical dimensions.
11. Pastoral Care requires a comprehensive, multi-level whole-school approach on a continuum from universal to targeted needs – including primary prevention, early intervention, intervention and postvention responses and initiatives with students and families.

### 3. THE PASTORAL CARE FRAMEWORK

Pastoral Care is central to education in the Diocese of Lismore, permeating all aspects of school life with the values and teachings embedded in the Catholic Worldview (which is found in *Catholic Education in the Diocese of Lismore, Foundational Values for Catholic Identity and Mission*). The Pastoral Care Framework, as depicted in the figure below, highlights this all-encompassing role of the Catholic Worldview and the central place of Pastoral Care in the educational context, while locating the student at the heart of wellbeing efforts and learning activities in Catholic schools.



A critically important feature of this model is its interconnectedness and dynamic nature. The Catholic Worldview encompasses and influences Pastoral Care. In turn, Pastoral Care is inextricably linked with relationships and the mutual recognition of others, experienced most deeply through being cared for, respected and valued. Thus, the life-giving potential of the Catholic Worldview, and of authentic Pastoral Care enacted through relationships, permeates the systems, structures and everyday domains of practice in schools so as to ensure that the human dignity and wellbeing of every person is of paramount importance. With such influences and practices in place, the student who is at the heart of our endeavours, is afforded every opportunity to experience and choose the fullness of life.



In summary, then, the framework has the following core components:

1. The Catholic Worldview is the context for Pastoral Care in Catholic schools.
2. Pastoral Care is enacted, and wellbeing enhanced, through relationships.
3. Pastoral Care involves a *whole school approach*, and is therefore dependent on systems and structures that help to facilitate this across all key domains of practice in schools.
4. The Christian dignity and wellbeing of the child or young person (student) is at the centre of all policies, procedures, decisions and activities in parish schools.

## CATHOLIC WORLDVIEW

A worldview influences how we look at everything in life, and how we think and act in particular circumstances. A Catholic and Christian worldview offers a way of life that should animate every aspect of a parish school's relationships, activities and curriculum, so enabling each student to form in themselves a clear idea of the meaning of life (*The Catholic School #3.*) This Catholic and Christian Worldview guides us in becoming who God calls us to be, namely, fully human. This Worldview must permeate the complete life of a parish school as it seeks to make Jesus Christ the inspiration in all that takes place there. If this worldview is authentically lived, then Jesus Christ is the centre, the fibre of a person's life. The Catholic Worldview that guides, challenges and directs the life of Catholic parish schools within the Diocese of Lismore is found in the document *Catholic Schooling in the Diocese of Lismore, Foundational Values for Catholic Identity and Mission*.

With Christ as our model, this Pastoral Care Framework draws upon our Catholic Worldview in understanding our relationships and the ways we "walk with" and meet each other in mutual respect.

## PASTORAL CARE

*Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another" (John 13:34).*

Pastoral Care is central to the mission of Catholic education and has its origins in the Judeo-Christian belief that each person is made in the image and likeness of God and deserves to be treated accordingly. The inspiration and basis for Pastoral Care in Catholic education is founded in Jesus Christ and the living out of the Christian way of life embedded in the Gospels and teaching of the Church. This means that Catholic schools are to be experienced as Christ centred learning communities in which each person is accompanied in their journey towards wholeness. When transformed this way, Catholic schools provide a rich evangelising environment enabling students to experience what Jesus Christ can provide, namely, a full, meaningful and abundant life (John 10:10).

Consequently, Pastoral Care is at the heart of how we relate to one another in a Catholic school and should be reflected in every action taken to promote and enhance physical, social, emotional, psychological, intellectual and spiritual wellness. Given that Pastoral Care seeks to promote such wholeness and deep inner strength, *wellbeing is viewed as an outcome of Pastoral Care*.

### RELATIONSHIPS

Pastoral Care seeks to promote wholeness, deep inner strength, resilience and wellbeing through the experience of life-giving relationships in all domains of Catholic school life. These relationships and associated actions are inspired and strengthened by Jesus Christ and the model provided by a Gospel way of life. Relationships between all members of the school community, including students, all school staff, parents, clergy, the parish and the wider community are therefore the main conduit for progressing Pastoral Care within Catholic education. Embedded within relationships is the experience of mutual recognition, which involves individuals - being emotionally and physically *cared for, respected* and being *valued* for their contributions, gifts and abilities. Authentic recognition is mutual which means experiencing being cared for, respected and valued as well as being guided and challenged in providing this for others.

This relational way of life is nurtured and sustained through lives centred on Jesus Christ, a rich prayer life and participation in the Christian sacraments. Building upon these foundations, Pastoral Care is expressed in love, respect, solidarity, compassion, tolerance, forgiveness, healing, reconciliation and social justice.

### SYSTEMS AND STRUCTURES

Various systems and structures are in place to assist parish school communities to strengthen the relationships and actions foundational to Pastoral Care and support the wellbeing of *all* students. These include the roles and responsibilities of staff, as well as the policies, procedures and practices which are in place across the key domains/areas of school life. As such, a *whole school approach is critical*, involving *all* members of the school community working together in offering authentic Pastoral Care for all students, across all facets of school life. The most effective approach works across a *continuum of care*, from universal support for all students to ensure that their wellbeing is promoted and enhanced, to early intervention and targeted support for students with higher level needs or at greater risk, including those who are vulnerable and marginalised. A holistic approach contributes to ensuring that *all* students, irrespective of background, needs or ability, are respected, valued and cared for. This continuum of care includes:

- » **Primary prevention** approaches that are strengths-based promote wellbeing, and build a sense of belonging within the school.
- » **Early Intervention** approaches to strengthen resilience and reduce risk.
- » **Intervention** approaches for students with higher level needs and in response to critical incidents.
- » **Postvention** approaches which aim to restore positive relationships.

### ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

All staff in Catholic schools in the Diocese of Lismore have responsibility for the Pastoral Care of members of the school community and for promoting the wellbeing of students. Members of a school leadership team engage staff, and ensure that Pastoral Care and wellbeing policies and procedures are 'lived' within their school. Staff model the building and maintaining of healthy relationships, which incorporate mutual respect, dignity, fairness, reconciliation, restoration, compassion and justice. Some staff will also have clearly designated roles and responsibilities, including liaison with appropriate others to support students with high level needs and to respond to critical incidents, consistent with the spirit and language imbued within the Pastoral Care Framework. These others may include individuals in Pastoral Care and wellbeing leadership roles, school chaplains, and counsellors, as well as Pastoral Care teams with specific responsibilities. The central role of parents in their children's wellbeing is recognised and incorporated within the school's approach to Pastoral Care.



## PROFESSIONAL LEARNING AND FORMATION

Ongoing professional learning, drawing on current and emerging research and practice related to Pastoral Care and wellbeing, is important for all school staff. Professional learning will be aligned with specific school needs, such as promoting positive relationships, First Aid Mental Health training, specific programs, and current mandatory requirements with regard to wellbeing-related issues. Such professional learning and ongoing formation will be consistent with Standard 4 of the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers. It will strengthen the capacity of teachers and schools to develop safe, inclusive learning environments and respond effectively to students with a range of wellbeing needs. In addition, opportunities for enhanced formal and informal lateral capacity building across school clusters will help support ongoing professional development.

## POLICIES & PROCEDURES

System policies and procedures clearly articulate, align with and support schools to ensure 'best practice' in relation to wellbeing in both primary and secondary school contexts. While parish schools will be guided and informed by the Catholic Schools Office Pastoral Care Policy, they have considerable autonomy in enacting effective, responsive 'local' decision making with staff, students and the wider community. This takes place in an environment where schools are supported and empowered through regular review processes where school activities are mapped against the Diocesan Pastoral Care Framework.

## RESOURCING

Resources to support the development and maintenance of Pastoral Care and student wellbeing need to be sufficient, accessible and accounted for. Such resources include access to systemic-wide support through the Catholic Schools Office.

## DOMAINS OF PRACTICE

Pastoral Care is embedded and expressed within everyday routine domains of practice that are central to effective education. These are curriculum and pedagogy, learning environment, and partnerships and services. *Within these interdependent domains of practice, authentic, positive relationships are fostered and recognition enabled.* Excellence in curriculum and pedagogy will not only foster quality learning but also provide a more positive and emotionally secure learning environment which, when supported by collaborative partnerships with family and other agencies, should enhance the wellbeing of all those in the school community.

In each of these domains, aspects of Pastoral Care need to be explicitly identified and incorporated in all related policies, procedures and practices. Embedding Pastoral Care within key domains of practice provides strong foundations for developing a multi-level, whole-school approach to wellbeing - on a continuum from universal to targeted needs – incorporating primary prevention, early intervention, intervention and postvention responses and initiatives for students and families.

## LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

*Learning Environment* refers to the ethos and culture of a Catholic school community, and to its physical environment. Inspired by the transcendent presence of God, and consistent with the Contemporary Learning Framework, students experience a rich learning environment inside and outside the classroom that promotes inquiry and innovation, is supportive, respectful, caring, inclusive and safe. Through such Pastoral Care, a commitment to wellbeing is explicitly communicated and enacted, individual differences are acknowledged and students appropriately supported, agreed school community expectations are consistently applied, and students, staff and parents have opportunities to participate in genuine dialogue and school decision-making processes. In addition, the social and physical space, including cyber environment, maximises student and staff safety.

### CURRICULUM & PEDAGOGY

*Curriculum and Pedagogy* refers to the linked processes of teaching and learning, which foster student participation and nurtures and challenges the intellectual and imaginative capacities of all learners. Pedagogy that is authentically pastoral is purposeful, meaningful and relevant, characterised by positive relationships and responsive to the individual needs of students. High quality curriculum strengthens wellbeing by explicitly focusing on relevant capabilities and fostering confidence and creativity. This then equips students with knowledge, skills, attitudes and strategies that lead to high levels of engagement and enable students to realise their full potential. This ensures teaching and learning provides a positive experience for every student of having voice, having choice, having influence, and working collaboratively. In addition, programs which promote Pastoral Care and student wellbeing are incorporated into the school activities.

### PARTNERSHIPS & SERVICES

*Partnerships and Services* refer to the numerous relationships that exist to support students and their learning within and between schools, families, parish, community, and external agencies. Schools share planning, programs and practices with key stakeholders; recognise the integral role parents play in their children's education, including in relation to wellbeing; facilitate productive partnerships with members of the school and parish community; actively work together as partners in faith formation of all community members; and engage in a range of school-based services with external agencies, to establish and maintain effective care and critical incident responses which support students and families, including those with high level needs. Strong partnerships and effective services are anchored in collaboration, trust and inclusive practice.

### WELLBEING

*Wellbeing* is multidimensional and expressed through the physical, social, emotional, psychological and spiritual life of a community and the personal lived experience of each individual within it. In Catholic education, while student wellbeing is of paramount importance, the wellbeing of all members of the school community is also an important focus. This includes purposeful reflection on and attention to teacher, principal and staff wellbeing, and in our interactions with parents. Key elements of wellbeing are positive self-regard, mutual respect, nurturing relationships, responsible behaviours and inner resilience. In this way, wellbeing is understood as the outcome or measure of a pastorally caring education system.

### THE STUDENT

At the heart of Catholic education is the student, a person created in the image of God who is worthy of dignity and respect. Through Pastoral Care that is inspired and strengthened by the presence of Jesus Christ, and exemplified in relationships that recognise the dignity of every person, students experience wellbeing as they are accompanied in their journey to freely choose the fullness of life (John 10:10). This is lived out in every aspect of school life, not least of which are the ways students views and perspectives inform our planning and decisions on matters that are important to them.



## 4. RELATED DOCUMENTATION

- † Catholic Schools Office Lismore Pastoral Care Policy
- † Catholic Education in the Diocese of Lismore, Foundational Values for Catholic Identity and Mission
- † Contemporary Learning Framework (CLF)
- † National Safe Schools Framework (MCEECDYA, 2011)
- † The Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians (MCEETYA, 2008)
- † National Framework for Health Promoting Schools (Australian Government Department of Health and Family Services, 2000)
- † AITSL – Australian Professional Standard for Teachers and Australian Professional Standard for Principals (2011)
- † Registration Systems and Member Non-Government Schools (NSW) Manual: Section 5.6





