



**Catholic Education
Diocese of Cairns**
*Learning with Faith
and Vision*

Policy

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| Author: | MG&E |

Enrolment of students in Catholic Schools

Purpose

This policy provides direction to schools in the development and implementation of school enrolment policies and guidelines.

The intention of this policy is to ensure the interpretation of the Catholic identity of our schools is inclusive in nature, whilst, at the same time, continuing to be faithful to the original mission of Catholic schools to educate children of Catholic families.

Policy

Catholic schools in the Diocese of Cairns welcome students of the Catholic faith and all who genuinely seek to participate positively in the life of the local Catholic community, and in the Church's evolving mission in the world. For those who come from other faith or religious backgrounds there is an expectation that students and their families will respect the school's Catholic beliefs, rituals and values.

In their outreach role our Catholic schools will serve the needs of those families who will benefit from their service. This will include those from culturally diverse backgrounds including Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples, opportunities for those who seek to deepen their faith in a Catholic context, those from backgrounds of marginalization and disadvantage including the economically and spiritually poor, and those with disability.

In seeking this participation, all who join the school community demonstrate a commitment to further understand, and support the values of the Catholic tradition, and to continue life's journey in, and respect for Gospel values which are at the heart of Catholic beliefs and practices.

Sharing these commitments and responsibilities is a condition of enrolment.

No child will be denied a place in a Catholic school because of genuine financial hardship.

This policy is set against a background where many Catholic schools in the Cairns Diocese have waiting lists as a result of a high demand for limited places. While every effort will be made to accommodate enrolments that fulfil the policy criteria, there will be occasions where students who otherwise meet the criteria for enrolment may not be offered a place. This outcome is regretted but will continue to be a factor in determining enrolments until additional capacity can be achieved.

Rationale

Catholic Schools in Australia have been established for the specific purpose of educating children from Catholic families. However the modern Catholic school also has a function in engaging the broader community in the mission of the Church. For example the 'Dialogue School' identified in the Catholic School Identity Program ('Leuven program') envisages a multicultural and multifaith school population that shows an openness for what Christianity might have to offer. Such a school is challenged to be in the service of all young people regardless of their cultural background or religion, and in matters of both education and spiritual formation, the Catholic school provides a service to society as a whole.

From the standpoint of faith, Christ's openness to all people, especially the disadvantaged and victims of prejudice, is the spirit that informs decisions about enrolment. It is this faith standpoint and changing conditions that create the need for schools to develop an evangelising role in addition to the catechetical role they have traditionally played as educators of Catholic children.

As the 'Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium' (1998) states, "...the Catholic school must be able to speak for itself effectively and convincingly. It is not merely a question of adaptation, but of missionary thrust, the fundamental duty is to evangelize, to go towards men and women wherever they are, so that they may receive the gift of salvation."

The Diocesan Board of Governance Education acknowledges the tension that this dual role creates and welcomes the dialogue that comes with it. The 'Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium' (1998) document has highlighted this issue when stating: "Catholic schools are ... places of evangelization, of complete formation, of inculturation, of apprenticeship, in lively dialogue between young people of different religions and social backgrounds."

Consequences

- Enrolment procedures at the diocesan and school level will reflect openness to all students whose parents/guardians are committed to further understand, support and live the values of the Catholic tradition.
- School Boards/Schools, in consultation with Parish Priests, will develop policies that reflect this Diocesan Policy.
- Schools will develop and promote procedures for the implementation of their policy in accordance with any Diocesan implementation guidelines provided, and conform with current and relevant legislation. This will include advising closing dates for applications for enrolments in the following year and the basis on which late enrolments will be accepted.
- The allocation of places in a Catholic school will be based on application and interview processes with Principals or their delegates given the discretion to determine which students and families will be enrolled based on their commitment to engage with the school for the benefit of both the student and the school community.
- Principals should be able to clearly articulate their enrolment decisions to parents.
- Local enrolment policies should provide a context, where appropriate, to advise families of the high demand for places, and that this may affect the acceptance of students who would otherwise meet the enrolment selection criteria.
- In the event of "all other things being equal" schools may accept enrolments in order of their date of application to the school. This should be reflected in the school's enrolment policy. Colleges should avoid accepting applications for enrolment for secondary places until the child is at least of primary school age. Local policies should avoid an 'enrol at birth' encouragement.
- Consideration in enrolment priorities should be given to:
 - Siblings of existing and former student members of the school community;
 - Students in Catholic primary schools wishing to transition to Catholic secondary colleges. Similar consideration will be given to Catholic students transitioning from rural and remote areas not serviced by a Catholic school;
 - Catholics who participate regularly in the celebration of the Eucharist;

- Catholics who commit to the values of the Catholic Church;
- Participating members of other Christian churches;
- Christians who commit to the values of the Catholic church;
- Those persons not affiliated with any Christian church, who commit to the values of the Catholic Church.

While at all times having regard for:

- Ensuring families in genuine financial hardship are not denied access to a Catholic Education
- Ensuring Catholic school options are available for students with disability
- Encouraging the engagement of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander families in the life of the school
- Opportunities for inter-faith understanding and dialogue within school communities
- Having some flexibility for new enrolments during the course of the year (for example for new families moving into a school's catchment area).

(Note: none of the categories for consideration in the above lists should be seen as mutually exclusive. It is highly likely that many applicants for enrolment will satisfy a number of criteria)

- At a school level, policy and guidelines should reflect:
 - Parents/guardians and students must be given adequate information about the Mission Statement and its application at the school;
 - Parents/guardians and students undertake to support school policies, behaviour expectations and education requirements consistent with a positive and supportive partnership between families and the school;
 - Families must make themselves aware of, endorse and where appropriate, undertake to participate in all activities of the school curriculum and community;
 - Families must undertake to contribute their time and support to the various active groups in the school community, for example, P & F meetings, parent engagement activities, fund-raising efforts and school maintenance activities;
 - Families must permit their child/children to take part in all the activities of the school, including all aspects of the formal religious education program, school liturgies and celebrations;
 - Parents/guardians must agree to pay in full, all fees and levies in accordance with the Fees Schedule detailed in the school Prospectus/Handbook, as a minimum contribution to the running of the school.
- Schools will develop procedures to inform their communities of special provisions for those in genuine hardship, and shall implement processes for fee relief that respect the dignity and privacy of families. Genuine hardship would generally be determined by an assessment of the family's income in relation to the National Poverty line.
- Similarly schools will ensure their enrolment policies and guidelines reflect inclusive practices for students with disability, consistent with diocesan policies and responsibilities under relevant legislation (DSE).
- Secondary colleges with overlapping catchments will work together to accommodate students transitioning from Catholic primary schools based on an understanding that families in some cases will not receive their first preference but every effort will be made to ensure they are accepted by a local Catholic college. Engagement of this provision is dependent on families making enrolment applications at all Catholic colleges for which their home address might be reasonably considered to be in the college's catchment.
- Schools, with the endorsement of the Executive Director, Catholic Education Services, may terminate an enrolment in situations where families are in material breach of their agreed obligations under the conditions of enrolment. Such provision would only be applied in extreme circumstances.
- Failure to meet the conditions of enrolment at one Catholic school, including the non payment of fees, may be used as grounds to decline enrolment at a new school. This consideration includes the transition from primary schools to secondary colleges. Principals will seek clearances from previous schools.

Reflection

The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium: Congregation for Catholic Education (1998)

The Catholic School: Congregation for Catholic Education (1977)

Declaration on Christian Education (Gravissimum Educationis) 1965

Educating Together in Catholic Schools (Congregation for Catholic Education) 2007

Defining Features (Cairns CES)

A Catholic School for your Child (CES)

See also (Related Policies and Guidelines)

Policies:

- Inclusive Practices
- Enrolling students with special needs
- Overseas students
- Dual enrolment
- Early enrolment

Guidelines:

- Cancellation of student enrolment
- Student enrolment form