



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

# Parent, Carer & School Community Code of Conduct

Promoting safety, wellbeing, and respectful  
collaboration in our Catholic school communities.



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*“How important it is to dream together... By ourselves, we risk seeing mirages, things that are not there. Dreams, on the other hand, are built together.”<sup>1</sup>*

# Introduction to Catholic Education

Families play a vital role in the primary education and formation of young people, where, through loving bonds and nurturing, human qualities are nourished.<sup>2,3</sup> Catholic schools in the Diocese of Cairns are privileged to contribute to aspects of the academic, social, emotional and spiritual growth of the students in our care.

Our learning communities, steeped in the wisdom of Jesus and the traditions of the Catholic Church, are enriched by respectful dialogue with other cultures and views on faith.

As places of hospitality, openness and belonging, the dynamics of Reflect, Respect, Embrace and Connect describe the ways that our Catholic schools enact a faith tradition [and culture] that aspires to human flourishing, framed through a First Nations' knowledge system:



Our Catholic schools accompany parents and carers in fulfilling their natural educational vocation and share this responsibility as part of the community of the Church.<sup>4,5</sup>

# Relationship Between Catholic Schools and Parents

A Catholic education offers parents a choice to integrate faith and culture into their family educational experience.<sup>6</sup> Catholic Education Diocese of Cairns has a vision to:

*“Offer every student in every school a world-class education enriched by their lived encounter with the Catholic faith. Christ-centered, student-focused, future-ready.”*

As educational partners, schools and parents\* have shared responsibilities and obligations that enhance the educational experience for all in our schools and colleges. Specifically, every member within each school community\* needs to recognise and respect the principles of the Gospels and honour the dignity and freedom of all.<sup>7,8</sup>

Central to these educational partnerships is an understanding that Catholic schools are places of encounter<sup>10</sup>, so strong relationships built on trust and mutual exchange<sup>11</sup> are essential between staff, students and families across all schools.

As such, there needs to be a shared commitment to listening with sensitivity to the ideas and actions of others and fruitful discernment towards peaceful, positive and pastoral outcomes.

*\* The term ‘parent’ refers to parents, carers, guardians and people who exercise parental responsibility for a child.*

*\* The term ‘school community’ refers to staff including volunteers, students, parents, local businesses and community organisations and visitors to the school.*



*“The community has an important role in the accompaniment of young people; it should feel collectively responsible for accepting, motivating, encouraging and challenging them. All should regard young people with understanding, appreciation and affection, and avoid constantly judging them or demanding of them a perfection beyond their years.”<sup>9</sup>*



# Purpose of Parent, Carer and School Community Code of Conduct

Communicating practices and procedures that promote and protect the safety and wellbeing of the school community, according to the terms of canon and civil law, is integral to resolving issues that require attention.<sup>12</sup>

This Parent, Carer and School Community Code of Conduct outlines expectations for respectful behaviours, appropriate to the deeply embedded ways our Catholic schools live out their faith and culture.<sup>13</sup>

We believe that parents and school staff can walk together and by exercising prudence, maintain safe, inclusive and collaborative learning environments. It is, therefore, an expectation that all parents and school community members abide by this code.<sup>14</sup>



*“The dignity of others is to be respected in all circumstances, not because that dignity is something we have invented or imagined, but because human beings possess an intrinsic worth superior to that of material objects and contingent situations. This requires that they be treated differently.”<sup>15</sup>*



# Elements of the Code

**Respectful Relationships, Life-Giving Partnerships and Catholic School Culture** are the three elements that encapsulate our vision for a community that is responsive to the needs and dignity of all and supports our Catholic culture of encounter through conduct and communication that is safe, positive and respectful.



## Respectful Relationships

Each person brings unique gifts and competencies that contribute to the richness and diversity of school communities.<sup>16</sup>

Each one of us has something to learn from one another too, and through the 'art of encounter' unity can be cultivated where differences exist.<sup>17, 18</sup>

In a spirit of working together with mutual respect, parents and school members need to commit to the following expected standards of behaviour:

- All communication is respectful.
- Parents act as positive role models.
- Professional differences regarding your child's education are respected.
- Conduct is respectful, courteous, considerate and solution focused.
- Communication methods will be appropriate.

*"Kindness ought to be cultivated [...]. Precisely because it entails esteem and respect for others, once kindness becomes a culture within society it transforms lifestyles, relationships and the ways ideas are discussed and compared."*<sup>19</sup>

### Parents and school community members demonstrate this by:

- ✓ Communicating in a constructive, timely, honest, respectful, and courteous manner.
- ✓ Behaving respectfully at all times.
- ✓ Understanding the significant responsibilities and challenges of staff.
- ✓ Understanding that staff will communicate with you, when possible, whilst accepting their right to disengage.
- ✓ Recognising that staff care for a large number of students with differing needs.
- ✓ Participating in meetings at an appropriate time to discuss your child's education or any concerns you may have.
- ✓ Ensuring that you support this code and advising staff of any concerns regarding the conduct of other members of the school community.



## Life-Giving Partnerships

Since Catholic schools are places of encounter, processes for encounter are created for life-giving, meaningful and enduring relationships with one another.<sup>20</sup>

Our communities seek truth in dialogue and embrace the wisdom and imagination of others<sup>21</sup> with patience and trust. To enrich the lived experience of community within a Catholic faith context, it is an expectation that members adhere to these standards of behaviour:

- Work positively with staff and communicate respectfully.
- Ensure students are ready to learn and attend school regularly.
- Commit to supporting the Whole School Behaviour Support Plan.
- Support the positive use of social media across schools.
- Escalate concerns according to school and Catholic Education Diocese of Cairns' policies.

*"As an African proverb says:  
'If you want to go fast, go  
alone. If you want to go far,  
go together'. Let us not allow  
ourselves to be robbed  
of fraternity." <sup>22</sup>*

### Parents and school community members demonstrate this by:

- ✓ Ensuring that any concerns regarding the conduct of students or parents are raised with school staff and not directly with other students and parents.
- ✓ Recognising the importance of positive partnerships between parents and staff.
- ✓ Ensuring your child attends school or school activities on time with the required equipment, well-rested and ready to learn.
- ✓ Confirming that your child is aware of the expected behaviours within the school and understands the consequences if these expectations are not followed.
- ✓ Ensuring that communication with the staff member is respectful and aligned with a positive partnership approach.
- ✓ Understanding and accepting that staff may not be able to respond to you immediately.
- ✓ Engaging positively with staff regarding your child's or others' behaviour/s, wellbeing and education.
- ✓ Escalating concerns regarding your child's education only after meeting to resolve the concern with the staff member in the first instance before elevating.
- ✓ Refraining from airing grievances on social media by addressing concerns directly with the school.



## Catholic School Culture

Catholic schools exist in witness to the life and teachings of Jesus, who inspires followers to celebrate the gift of creation and humanity through a relational and compassionate way of being.

Informed by the Gospel message, our schools serve families who seek to engage in an excellent educational experience for their children, within a welcoming and inclusive Catholic community.

We are attentive to the rich diversity of voices that are present in our communities, and prioritise the young and vulnerable, towards fulness of life for all. Our schools are places of belonging and growing, so it is expected that, together, all work to enhance our culture by:

- Respecting that Catholic Education Diocese of Cairns' schools are faith-based and that spiritual-based learnings are supported and promoted.
- Proactively supporting the positive school culture based on respect and recognition of the Gospel values.
- Providing positive support to the school community.

*"[God] knows how to cherish and nurture the seeds of goodness sown in the hearts of the young. Each young person's heart should thus be considered "holy ground", a bearer of seeds of divine life, before which we must "take off our shoes" in order to draw near and enter more deeply into the Mystery." <sup>23</sup>*

### Parents and school community members demonstrate this by:

- ✓ Acknowledging and respecting that the school is a faith-based Catholic school, whilst supporting the Catholic ethos.
- ✓ Supporting the positive culture of the school through respectful conduct and communication.
- ✓ Acknowledging and abiding by this Code of Conduct.
- ✓ Speaking positively about the school and raising any concerns you have maturely [confidentially] through the school's grievance processes.
- ✓ Understanding that whilst your child is most important to you, we treat all students as important and ensure all students receive a world-class education.
- ✓ Ensuring you abide by Catholic Education Diocese of Cairns' privacy policies and understand that the school is required to maintain confidentiality.
- ✓ Working with staff to support students' education through respectful communication and a collaborative approach.
- ✓ Using social media appropriately to support a positive school culture by promoting respect, inclusivity and constructive communication.



# Breaches and Consequences

School leadership has the right and duty to intervene in situations that compromise the safety and wellbeing of others, according to the “universal, particular or proper law of Catholic schools”<sup>24</sup>. In instances where there is a breach of the code, natural justice will be provided, and may result in the following necessary and adequate measures:

- The provision of correspondence that identifies the conduct and requests that an individual cease the behaviour that is in breach of this code.
- Requesting a meeting with an individual to discuss identified conduct and reinforcing the elements of this Parent, Carer and School Community Code of Conduct.
- Serving a reminder of the expected behaviours within the Code of Conduct.
- Serving a breach notice identifying improper conduct.
- Identifying the conduct and directing individuals to limited communication with the school via an identified staff member.
- Identifying the conduct and directing individuals to leave the school grounds or be excluded from the school grounds or attending school activities.\*
- Prohibiting individuals from the school for a period of time.\*

If the conduct is serious or repetitive in nature:

- Catholic Education Diocese of Cairns reserves its right to terminate the enrolment of the student.
- Calling authorities including police and child protection services.

*Please note physical or verbal abuse or threats to staff, students, community members, or refusal to leave upon direction will result in a complaint to the Queensland Police Service.*

*\*Pursuant to the Education (General Provisions) Act, principals of schools have the legislative power to direct that you leave the school grounds and remain off the school grounds for up to 90 days at a time.*



*“Let us not forget that differences are creative; they create tension and in the resolution of tension lies humanity’s progress”.<sup>25</sup>*

# Family Law

Catholic Education Diocese of Cairns follows the over-riding principle:

***“It is not the role of the school to become involved, mediate, or take sides in parental disputes. These are matters that are properly resolved privately or through legal processes.”***

This involves the following considerations:

- The education of a child is primarily the responsibility of the child’s parents.
- Decisions should be made on the basis of ensuring, as far as possible, the continued effective and efficient operation of the school.
- The Principal should make decisions based primarily on what is considered to be in the best educational interests of the child.
- Where parents cannot agree on what is in the child’s best interests, it is the role of the court, not the school, to determine those interests.
- The school is not the appropriate place for family disputes to be resolved nor is it appropriate for school staff to resolve such issues.
- Decisions should be made in an unbiased manner and as far as reasonably practicable, without favour to either parent.
- The obligations imposed by other legislation, such as the Privacy Act and child protection legislation and policies also need to be considered when dealing with Family Law related issues.
- The continued effective and efficient operation of the school and a parent’s obligations under the Education (General Provisions) Act 2006 (i.e. to ensure that their children of compulsory school age receive an education) takes precedence over any interest parents may assert they have under the Act.
- Where doubt arises in resolving any issues, the educational interests, safety and welfare of the child are to be the paramount consideration.



*“It is not easy, it always means having to give something up and to negotiate, but if we do it for the sake of helping others, we can have the magnificent experience of setting our differences aside and working together for something greater. If, as a result of our own simple and at times costly efforts, we can find points of agreement amid conflict, build bridges and make peace for the benefit of all, then we will experience the miracle of the culture of encounter.”<sup>26</sup>*

# Grievances

To raise concerns, or address a grievance, in the first instance you are encouraged to speak with your child's teacher. If appropriate, you may request to meet with the Principal.

For unresolved or difficult issues, please refer to Catholic Education Diocese of Cairns' guidelines and posters that explain the correct processes for complaints. These aim for resolution through mutually respectful behaviour ([www.cns.catholic.edu.au/about/conduct-complaints-grievances](http://www.cns.catholic.edu.au/about/conduct-complaints-grievances)).

For further information regarding Catholic Education Diocese of Cairns' policies, guidelines and processes, go to our website: [www.cns.catholic.edu.au/about/policies](http://www.cns.catholic.edu.au/about/policies)

If you are in dispute with your school, it is advised that you review, understand and comply with the expectations stated in this Code of Conduct and the obligations agreed to in the conditions of enrolment.

Should you remain dissatisfied following attempts to resolve a grievance, a complaint can be submitted to the Diocese of Cairns' Professional Standards and Safeguarding Office. Here, your complaint will be assessed and referred to the appropriate office for review.

## Professional Standards and Safeguarding Office



(07) 4050 9765



[professionalstandards@cns.catholic.edu.au](mailto:professionalstandards@cns.catholic.edu.au)

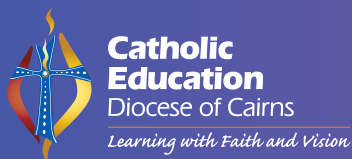


*"In a pluralistic society, dialogue is the best way to realise what ought always to be affirmed and respected apart from any ephemeral consensus. Such dialogue needs to be enriched and illumined by clear thinking, rational arguments, a variety of perspectives and the contribution of different fields of knowledge and points of view."* <sup>27</sup>

# Notes

1. Pope Francis, 2020, [Fratelli Tutti](#), 8.2, 3.
2. Francis, 2020, 114.
3. Catholic Education Diocese of Cairns (CEDC), 2024, [Cairns Catholic Education Community's Strategic Directions 2021-2025](#).
4. Catholic Education Diocese of Cairns (CEDC), 2024, [Encounter Catholic Identity Framework on Catholic Education Services website](#).
5. Congregation for Catholic Education, 2022, [The Identity of the Catholic school for a culture of dialogue](#), 44.
6. Congregation for Catholic Education, 2022, 41, 42.
7. Ibid, 38.
8. Ibid, 40.
9. Dicastery of Communication, 2019, [Christus Vivit: Post-synodal Exhortation to Young People and to the entire People of God](#), 243.
10. Congregation for Catholic Education, 2022, 84.
11. Ibid, 62.
12. Congregation for Catholic Education, c 40.
13. Francis, 2020, 216.
14. Congregation for Catholic Education, 2022, 93.
15. Francis, 2020, 213.
16. Ibid, 143.
17. Ibid, 215.
18. Ibid, 215.
19. Ibid, 224.
20. Ibid, 217.
21. Ibid, 50.
22. Pope Francis, 2019, [Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation to the Young People and to the Entire people of God](#), (Christus Vivit), 167.
23. Pope Francis, 2019, 67.
24. Congregation for Catholic Education, 2022, 5.
25. Francis, 2020, 203.
26. Francis, 2019, 169.
27. Francis, 2020, 211.





## Professional Standards and Safeguarding Office

 (07) 4050 9765

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