All secondary colleges offer a range of sporting and co-curricular activities such as debating, Duke of Edinburgh’s Award, mock trial, and a range of social justice and community service activities.

What part does Religious Education play in the curriculum?

Religious Education is at the heart of Catholic education, informing and influencing all aspects of school life. Religious Education is provided in many ways. In the classroom, students follow the Religious Education curriculum and the student textbooks ‘To Know, Worship, and Love’. Students also participate in sacramental programs, reflection days and retreats, in the liturgical and prayer life of the school, in community service activities and social justice programs. All students are expected to participate in the religious life of the school, including the formal Religious Education curriculum.

What provisions are made for students with diverse learning needs?

Catholic schools in Sydney have a long tradition of commitment to supporting students with diverse needs. Our schools provide a wide range of support for students for whom English is not a first language. This includes additional, dedicated staff in schools, and a program of itinerant support and hub-based reception programs for new arrivals. Likewise, schools have staff dedicated to the support of students with special education needs who can draw on the specialist services of personnel in central and regional offices. We also cater for Gifted students. The Newman program provides opportunities for students whose education can be extended, accelerated and/or enriched. A growing number of our schools have become accredited Newman schools, indicating that they have been endorsed through a rigorous and demanding process. All of these programs are enhanced through ongoing exploration of approaches to blended learning involving technologies which are adaptive, inclusive and assistive.

In 2016 Sydney Catholic Schools opened the Eileen O’Connor Catholic College at Lewisham, the first dedicated school for students with disabilities in the Archdiocese of Sydney. The establishment of the College is an important component of an overarching strategic and cohesive plan developed by Sydney Catholic Schools to better equip schools to provide high-quality support for students with disabilities. In addition, the provision of alternative programs for students with disabilities will give parents greater choice about educational placements for their children with special learning needs.

The college has initially been established as a specialist facility for Stage 4 Secondary students with moderate intellectual disabilities and complex learning needs. It will eventually be the hub for a special school network of satellite classes in both Primary and Secondary schools across all three regions.

Are parents encouraged to become involved in systemic Catholic schools?

As the Church recognises that parents are the primary educators of their children and that the home and the school are bound together in common purpose, parents are actively encouraged to become involved in their children’s education. Parents are invited to participate in school planning and review processes and are represented on the School Finance Committee, Enrolment Committee and school parent groups. Authentic parent engagement is an ongoing strategic improvement goal.
Who can enrol in a systemic Catholic school?

Catholic schools have a unique role in helping families to nurture and develop their Catholic faith within the context of their parish and regional communities. As inclusive and loving communities, they also welcome families from other faith traditions or non-religious backgrounds who are prepared to support the ethos and values of the Catholic Church.

Children of regularly worshipping Catholic families with strong demonstrable links to their faith community who and are prepared to support the ethos and values of the Catholic Church.

Children of other Christian denominations who prepare to support the ethos and values of the Catholic Church.

Children of families with ‘special pastoral circumstances’ as assessed by the school’s enrolment committee or, where appropriate, the school Principal and/or priests of associated parishes, in conjunction with the Principal.

Children of families not covered above, or who are outside the local designated Catholic parish.

Children of regularly worshipping Orthodox families who have strong demonstrable links to their faith community and who are prepared to support the ethos and values of the Catholic Church.

Children of regular worshipping families from other faith denominations who have strong demonstrable links to their faith community and who are prepared to support the ethos and values of the Catholic Church.

School year calendar

Schools in the Sydney Catholic Education Foundation system are covered by the system of schools administered by Sydney Catholic Schools.

There are 168 Catholic schools in the system of schools administered by Sydney Catholic Schools. These schools develop their own enrolment policies and procedures. The Archdiocese of Sydney is the largest of the four dioceses in the Sydney metropolitan area. The map shows the area covered by the Archdiocese of Sydney and the neighbouring dioceses of Broken Bay, Parramatta and Wollongong.

How are systemic Catholic schools administered?

Principals and senior staff are appointed through a rigorous selection process conducted by Sydney Catholic Schools. Principals have the delegated authority to appoint teachers and other personnel to work in their schools and, with their school executive, are responsible for the day-to-day running of the school.

How are quality and effectiveness assured in a systemic Catholic school?

A priority is placed on ensuring that high-quality teaching and learning takes place in all our schools. Principals lead their schools in creating the culture and practice of continuous improvement to bring about improved learning outcomes for all students. Each school implements the School Review and Improvement (SRI) Framework while also undertaking peer reviews for compliance with state and federal government accountability requirements. In implementing the SRI Framework, schools engage with students, parents, pastors and the wider community on their learning improvement journey.

How are systemic Catholic schools funded?

As well as tuition fees, there are some separate school-based charges (sport, excursions, technology etc.) and a School Building Levy. This levy is used to help pay for the loans taken out by the parish or Sydney Catholic Schools to cover building works, repairs and maintenance in school buildings.

At HSC level, there may also be some charges for specific subjects (e.g.: Woodwork, Construction etc.).

Students meet the alternative criteria of undertaking approved education or training in paid work for at least 25 hours per week. Students therefore do not need to re-enrol for Year 11.

Parents/caregivers are usually interviewed by the Principal or delegated staff member before the enrolment is finalised. Documents needed at the interview include the completed enrolment form, parish reference, birth certificate, baptismal certificate, immunisation records, and passport, if you are not an Australian citizen.

Secondary schools may also require academic results or reports from the student’s previous school, a reference from the parish priest or another prominent citizen, and medical records, if needed. Most schools arrange an orientation day in Term 4 for children starting school the following year.

Many schools also hold information nights for parents in Term 4 or in Term 1 of the year of commencement.

How much are the school fees?

Tuition fees are charged for all systemic primary and secondary colleges. In 2015, Sydney Catholic Schools moved to a common school tuition fee. This means that there will be slight variations in tuition fees from school to school, depending on the socio-economic rating of the area in which the school is located.

On average, the tuition fees for a Year 7-8 student are around $1,600 per year, for a Year 9-10 student, around $1,700 per year and for a Year 11-12 student around $2,200 per year. As mentioned, there will be some minor variations between schools.

All Catholic systemic schools in the Archdiocese of Sydney are responsible for their own enrollments. If you are interested in enrolling your child, you need to contact the school’s Principal or enrolment secretary, who will advise you of the procedures to follow. The final enrolment period usually commences in March and continues until the end of May but where vacancies exist, schools can also enrol outside of the formal enrolment period.

By law, students must commence school before they turn six years of age. School entry age is no longer restricted but students must be able to demonstrate a capacity to move to Year 1 the following year. Generally, students in NSW start school around the age of five. In June 2009, the NSW State Government legislated to raise the minimum school leaving age from 15 to 17, unless the child is undertaking approved education or training in paid work for at least 25 hours per week. Students therefore do not need to re-enrol for Year 11.

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Parents who need support to meet the cost of educating their child in a systemic Catholic school may be eligible for a bursary through the Catholic Education Foundation. Information about the Catholic Education Foundation can be found from your local Catholic school or from the Sydney Catholic Schools website.

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