



POLICIES

Student Wellbeing and Pastoral Care Policy

Classification

Policy Number: TL201501-1.2 • **Version/Last Updated:** 1.2/ June 2017 • **Audience:** Public • **Commencement:** 6 March 2015

Implementation Resources

- [The National Safe Schools Framework\(NSSF\)](#)
- [NSSF Support Materials](#)

▼ 1.0 Rationale

Catholic schools in the Archdiocese of Sydney have had a long history of exercising a role in the pastoral care of their students and it began with the work of the religious congregations. The very term 'pastoral care' traces its origins back to Jesus' description of himself as the Good Shepherd (John 10:1-21). This endeavour has been, and continues to be, an educational endeavour for the development of the 'whole person' and reflects '...the centrality of the human person in the educational project of the Catholic school' ([The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium no. 9](#)). It is recognised, in this regard, that schools have a primary purpose in education, and that they need to be sensitive to the fact that there will be instances in which the appropriate course of action is to work in partnership with or refer to other agencies within the Church, or more widely. Parent support for, and involvement in, their children's education is a critical factor in student engagement, achievement and wellbeing.

Sydney Catholic schools are commissioned by the [Archbishop's Charter](#) to "care for students through an inclusive curriculum, pastoral care and student wellbeing policies and practices that are consistent with the mission of the Catholic school."

In our schools, wellbeing is understood as a sustainable state characterised by positive relationships at school, positive attitudes, resilience, being able to maximise strengths and high levels of satisfaction with learning experiences (e.g. Noble and Wyatt, 2008). Wellbeing is best promoted in a safe and supportive school.

In a safe and supportive school, the risk from all types of harm is minimised, diversity is valued and all members of the school community feel respected and included and can be confident that they will receive support in the face of any threats to their safety or wellbeing.

(National Safe Schools Framework (NSSF, p.2)

A whole school approach to creating safe and supportive learning and teaching communities acknowledges the strong interconnections between student safety, student wellbeing and learning. Harassment, aggression, violence and bullying are less likely to occur in a caring, respectful and supportive teaching and learning community. Student safety and wellbeing are enhanced when students feel connected to their school, have positive and respectful relationships with their peers and teachers, feel confident about their social and emotional skills and satisfied with their learning experiences at school. The wellbeing of all students is at the heart of Catholic Education enabling a learning environment which provides for the spiritual, physical, emotional, cognitive and social growth of its students and staff.

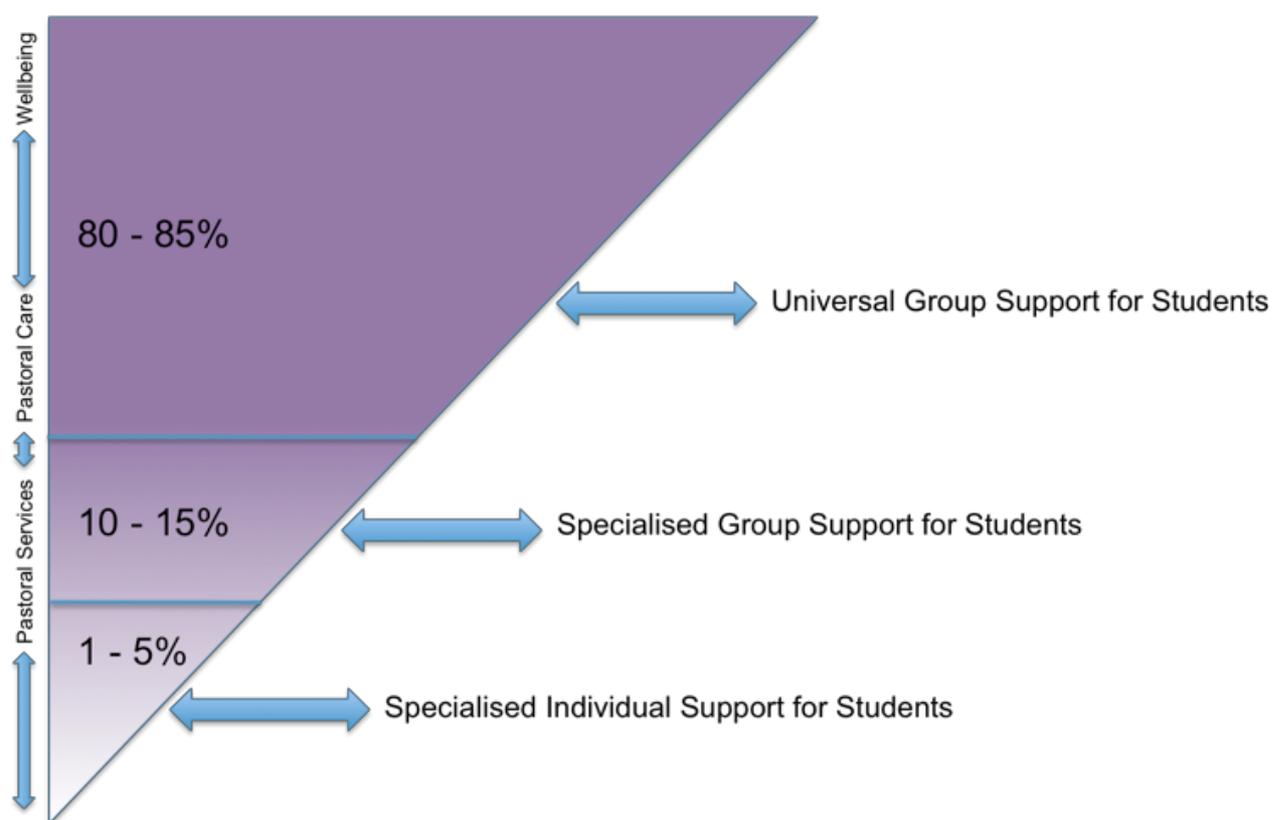
Consideration of wellbeing must take place in ways which support, and are supported by, the school's approach to learning.

This policy provides an overarching framework for the provision of an environment in which the wellbeing of students can be fostered and safeguarded. It is not prescriptive of particular programs or approaches, rather providing a basis on which the suitability of these can be judged. The system has a range of other policies, named in section 7.0, which will apply in particular circumstances.

The Student Wellbeing Continuum

Wellbeing and pastoral care initiatives in Sydney Catholic schools should be seen in the context of a continuum from universal support for all students, to interventions for students with high level and/or critical needs. This is described below.

Holistic strategies and programs (i.e. Wellbeing and Pastoral Care) which foster positive states of mind are designed for all students. Most students (85%) respond, whilst a smaller percentage are 'at risk' (10-15%) and an even smaller group (1-5%) exhibit needs that require a greater and more specialised level of support and professional intervention (i.e. Pastoral Services). This continuum of service and support is reflected in the following diagram.



Lewis & Sugai (1999)

▼ 2.0 Guiding Principles

In the context of Catholic schools in the Archdiocese of Sydney, the approach to wellbeing is based upon these beliefs:

- 2.1 Wellbeing is central to learning
- 2.2 Learning contributes to wellbeing
- 2.3 Each student has inherent dignity
- 2.4 Each student is unique
- 2.5 Each student experiences life uniquely
- 2.6 Students are active partners in the development and achievement of their own wellbeing

- 2.7 Wellbeing is nurtured in the context of community
- 2.8 Parents play a key role in promoting wellbeing
- 2.9 Students can learn, and schools can teach knowledge and skills that support the achievement of wellbeing
- 2.10 Fostering and supporting the wellbeing of students is integral to being a good teacher
- 2.11 Catholic schools seek to positively influence student wellbeing
- 2.12 Catholic schools influence student wellbeing in distinctive and purposeful ways

▼ 3.0 Policy

- 3.1 The National Safe Schools Framework ([NSSE](#)), (2011) will be adopted as the platform for the wellbeing of students enrolled in the schools of the Archdiocesan system, to equip them to act for their own and others wellbeing.

The Framework provides a vision and a set of guiding principles for safe and supportive school communities that also promote student wellbeing and develop respectful relationships.

The NSSF identifies nine elements to assist Australian schools to continue to create teaching and learning communities where all members of the school community both feel and are safe from harassment, aggression, violence and bullying. It also responds to new and emerging challenges for school communities such as cybersafety, cyber bullying and community concerns about young people and weapons.

- 3.2 All schools and system representatives will use the NSSF [support materials](#) including an audit tool which will be a strong element of comprehensive implementation.

The Framework adopts a whole school approach to safety and wellbeing. It provides a comprehensive range of evidence-informed practices to guide schools in preventing and responding to incidents of harassment, aggression, violence and situations of bullying and to implement their responsibilities in relation to child protection issues. A suite of excellent support materials including an audit tool, which will be a strong element of comprehensive implementation, is included on the [website](#) and specifically tailored resources for students and parents can be found at the [Safe Schools Hub](#).

- 3.3 All schools will attend to the key elements of the [NSSE](#).

The Framework identifies nine key elements to assist schools in planning, implementing and maintaining a safe, supportive and protective learning community that promotes student safety and wellbeing.

1. Leadership commitment to a safe school

The school leadership team accepts responsibility for the development and maintenance of pastoral care and wellbeing structures that will support all members of the school community. These structures are regularly evaluated and reviewed with updates communicated to the whole school community.

2. A supportive and connected school culture

The school provides a clear demonstration of respect and support for student diversity through its inclusive actions and structures. Positive, caring and respectful relationships are evident throughout the school community.

3. Policies and procedures

Whole school, collaboratively developed policies, procedures and structures for supporting safety and wellbeing are clearly understood and followed by all.

4. Professional learning

Ongoing professional learning is undertaken to ensure that all staff are kept up to date with research

and technology related to pastoral care and wellbeing. Staff are continually made aware of both the responsibilities and the limitations of their role.

5. *Positive behaviour management*

Fair, consistent, and positive approaches to student learning, support and challenges are understood and implemented by all staff. Students and, where appropriate, their parents are involved in positive behaviour planning.

6. *Engagement, skill development and safe school curriculum*

There is a strong focus on the enhancement of student engagement with learning. Relational teaching strategies are utilised and social and emotional skills are taught and modeled across all year levels.

7. *A focus on student wellbeing and student ownership*

Strengths based approaches to student learning and a range of opportunities for student ownership, decision making, student voice and leadership are evident.

8. *Early intervention and targeted support*

There is acknowledgement that some students struggle, for a variety of reasons, to successfully engage with learning. Effective and respectful processes exist for the early identification of students and families who require additional support.

9. *Partnerships with families and community*

The school works collaboratively with parents, carers and the wider community to extend support to students and families and provides opportunities for education on issues related to student wellbeing and safety.

These nine elements are based on a combination of good practice, research-based literature, and feedback from representatives from all educational systems, sectors and educators. Teachers are encouraged to be both proactive in building safe and supportive learning communities as well as reactive in responding effectively to situations involving child maltreatment, harassment, aggression, violence and bullying. The nine elements also reflect a view that responsibility for the development and maintenance of a safe and supportive school community requires a respectful partnership among students, teachers, parents and carers, as well as the broader community and education systems and sectors.

▼ 4.0 Procedures

4.1 **Sydney Catholic Schools (SCS) is to:**

- 4.1.1 Provide a coherent policy framework
- 4.1.2 Provide professional learning activities to school and SCS personnel to support this policy
- 4.1.3 Resource support structures and personnel
- 4.1.4 Monitor compliance with this policy through existing protocols, such as Cyclical Review and Strategic Review and Improvement (SRI)

4.2 **Principals are to:**

- 4.2.1 Implement the NSSF whole school approach for student wellbeing in curriculum and in school procedures
- 4.2.2 Adopt and implement Archdiocesan policies that are aligned with the NSSF
- 4.2.3 Observe all legislative requirements and engage as necessary with external agencies in relation to student wellbeing
- 4.2.4 Engage internal and/or external specialist advice about wellbeing related matters as required

- 4.2.5 Work in partnership with SCS staff, parents and the school and broader Church community to achieve the purposes of this policy
- 4.2.6 Ensure that staff have a working knowledge of government and system policies and procedures (see the list at the end of the policy)
- 4.2.7 Respond promptly to any breach of this policy

4.3 **Teachers are to:**

- 4.3.1 Create and maintain safe and positive learning environments
- 4.3.2 Model and promote socially responsible values and behaviour
- 4.3.3 Explicitly teach socially acceptable and responsible behaviour
- 4.3.4 Follow SCS and whole school policies and procedures to promote learner safety and wellbeing

4.4 **School Counsellors are to:**

- 4.4.1 Familiarise themselves with all aspects of the NSSF, including support documents
- 4.4.2 Contribute to the implementation of the Framework through their specific knowledge and clinical support
- 4.4.3 Follow SCS and whole school policies and procedures to enhance student safety and wellbeing

4.5 **Students are to:**

- 4.5.1 Follow school policies, procedures and guidelines in relation to wellbeing
- 4.5.2 Contribute positively to the development of safe and inclusive learning environments
- 4.5.3 Report all concerns about their own wellbeing and that of fellow students

4.6 **Parents, families and carers are to:**

- 4.6.1 Ensure children are aware of and understand the requirements of policies and procedures relating to wellbeing in school
- 4.6.2 Work in partnership with schools to promote wellbeing in their children
- 4.6.3 Be aware of the significant influence they have on their children's wellbeing
- 4.6.4 Support SCS and school policies and procedures with respect to wellbeing

▼ 5.0 **Bases of Discretion**

It is expected that principals will use this document, and the NSSF itself, as the bases for their planning in the area of student wellbeing. Principals may determine the timing and emphasis of their implementation based on the outcomes of the audit tool.

▼ 6.0 **Explanatory Notes and Definitions**

6.1 **National Safe Schools Framework (NSSF)**

The Framework provides a vision and a set of guiding principles for safe and supportive school communities that also promote student wellbeing and develop respectful relationships.

The NSSF identifies nine elements to assist Australian schools to continue to create teaching and learning communities where all members of the school community both feel and are safe from harassment, aggression, violence and bullying. It also responds to new and emerging challenges for school communities

such as cybersafety, cyber bullying and community concerns about young people and weapons. The NSSF should not be confused with the Safe Schools' Coalition.

6.2 National Safe Schools Framework (NSSF) support materials

The Framework adopts a whole school approach to safety and wellbeing. It provides a comprehensive range of evidence-informed practices to guide schools in preventing and responding to incidents of harassment, aggression, violence and situations of bullying and to implement their responsibilities in relation to child protection issues. A suite of excellent support materials including an audit tool, which will be a strong element of comprehensive implementation, is included at this [website](#) and specifically tailored resources for students and parents can be found at the [Safe Schools Hub](#).

6.3 Student Wellbeing

Student Wellbeing is a student's level of satisfaction about the quality of their life at school. Optimal (or desirable) wellbeing is characterised by positive feelings and attitude, positive relationships with other students and teachers, resilience, and satisfaction with self and learning experiences at school. (Noble, McGrath, Roffey and Rowling 2008).

In Sydney Catholic Schools this definition is underpinned with the values and beliefs of Catholic Education. The wellbeing of all students is at the heart of Catholic Education enabling a learning environment which provides for the spiritual, physical, emotional, cognitive and social wellbeing of its students and staff.

6.4 Positive Education

Positive education is the scientific inquiry of the social-emotional skills, relationships, strengths and behaviours that contribute to student wellbeing and resilience in the school context and the school and classroom practices that contribute to positive, safe and supportive teaching and learning communities. (Noble & McGrath 2014).

6.5 Pastoral care

Pastoral Care refers to the overall climate of care that exists within a school. It includes the policies, processes, programs and practices delivered at school level with the purpose of supporting and enhancing the wellbeing of the students.

It provides a foundation for relationships between students and staff based on mutual respect. In short, Pastoral Care is an authentic expression of the vision and mission of the school.

6.6 Pastoral Services

Pastoral Services refers to a range of services available within and beyond the school which support students and their families, teachers, school leadership teams and SCS staff. These services include counselling, debriefing, case management, education, advocacy and liaison, all of which foster a holistic approach to learning and teaching.

▼ 7.0 Supporting Documents

7.1 Related policies

- [Anti-Bullying Policy](#) and [supporting resources](#)
- [Student Management: Suspension, Transfer and Exclusion](#)
- [Critical Incidents Management Policy](#)
- [Management of Students with Challenging Behaviours: Guidelines](#)
- [Child Protection: Responding to Complaints and Allegations Policy](#)

- [Authentic Learning Statement](#)
- [Enrolment Policy for Systemic Catholic Schools in the Archdiocese of Sydney](#)

7.2 Supporting documents

7.2.1 Key Documents

The key resource for this policy is the National Safe Schools Framework. It has a series of supporting resources. Links appear below.

Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) (2011). National Safe Schools Framework. MCEECDYA.

- [The Framework](#)
- [Support Materials](#)
- [Safe Schools Hub](#)
- [Schools Audit Tool and Plan](#)

7.2.2 Government mandatory policies and procedures

The current educational and legislative context within which schools operate places mandatory requirements upon our organisations which cannot be ignored. Schools will continue to systematically respond to these requirements.

- [Children and Young Persons \(Care and Protection\) Act 1998\(NSW\)](#)
- [Disability Discrimination 1992 \(Cth\)](#)
- [Disability Standards for Education \(2005\) and Guidance Notes \(2005\), revised 2012.](#)
- [Australian Education Act 2013\(Cth\)](#)
- [NSW Government. Keep Them Safe Online Mandatory Reporting Guide \(2013\)](#)
- [National Professional Standards for Teachers \(2011\)](#). Particularly Standard 4. Create and Maintain Supportive and Safe Learning Environments, p.14

7.2.3 Church Documents

- [The Archbishop's Charter for Catholic Schools \(2012\)](#)
- [Catholic Social Teaching. A Framework for Faith in Action \(2012\)](#)
- [Educating today and tomorrow: A renewing passion](#). Congregation for Catholic Education (2014)

7.2.4 References

- Noble, T. and Wyatt, T. (2008). Scoping Study into Approaches to Student Wellbeing: Final Report. Australian Catholic University and Erebus International
- Noble, T., McGrath, H., Roffey, S., & Rowling, L. (2008). A scoping study on student wellbeing. Canberra, ACT, Australia: Department of Education, Employment & Workplace Relations

▼ 8.0 Appendices

Nil

▼ 9.0 Classification

9.1 **Policy Number:** TL201501-1.2

9.2 **Version:** 1.2

Last modified: June 2017

This policy supersedes all previous policies relating to matters contained therein. In so much as any aspect of this policy may appear to be in conflict with another Archdiocesan system or school-based policy, then precedence is to be given to this policy.

9.3 **Audience:** Public

9.4 **Review by:** April 2017

The safety and wellbeing of students is of such significance that the efficacy of this policy will be continuously monitored for its appropriateness. Changing laws, legal precedents and experience may all serve as triggers for immediate review.

9.5 **Approved by Leadership Team:** 11 September 2014

9.6 **Endorsed by SACS Board:** 25 February 2015

9.7 **Approved by Executive Director of Sydney Catholic Schools:** 2 March 2015

9.8 **Commencement Date:** 6 March 2015

Related Policies

- [Anti-Bullying Policy](#) and [supporting resources](#)
- [Student Management: Suspension, Transfer and Exclusion](#)
- [Critical Incidents Management Policy](#)
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