



# St. Bernadette's Catholic Primary School

## Pastoral Care Policy

Initiated 2011  
Due for Review 2014

### Pastoral Care Policy

Pastoral Care is the integration of the academic, social, emotional, physical and spiritual dimensions of a school so that an atmosphere of care is alive and seen in the school community. Each member of the school community – parents, students and staff is invited to work together in an expression of the philosophy and vision of the school.

The Pastoral Care at St. Bernadette's Catholic Primary School seeks to relate to each individual, whatever his/her personality, temperament or intellect.

Our school motto of kindness, honesty and respect is based on the example Jesus set us in the Gospels. By following his lead our school will be a welcoming place where everyone feels nourished, comfortable and safe.

All members of our school community, students, parents, staff and visitors, have a right to live out our Catholic faith through the building of caring relationships with one another.

### Rationale

Pastoral Care in a Catholic School is informed by and given its spirit by the school's place as part of the evangelical ministry of the Church. The Catholic school is in essence the face of Christ for its whole community and its pastoral role needs to infuse every aspect of its operation and its relationships.

The life of every human person is seen to have a God given value and meaning which is enhanced in a school community whose atmosphere is permeated with the Gospel spirit of Freedom and Love. In this setting the students experience their dignity as people before they know its definition. Pastoral Care is the concern of all involved in Catholic education and has both implicit and explicit elements.

At the implicit level every aspect of the school's educational ministry needs to be infused by the Church's understanding of what it means to be a community of believers. This means that Pastoral Care cannot be confined to organisational or curriculum areas alone.

At the explicit level there needs to be a clear articulation of specific ways the Pastoral Care of each member or group in the school community is to be assisted to develop his/her potential, be nurtured, be healed and educated. It is here that programs, structures and specialist personnel are necessary to ensure that specific needs are met in a systematic fashion. It is recommended that a collaborative approach be taken in implementing the Framework.

Parents are the first educators of their children. The role of the Catholic school is to assist parents in the Catholic education of their children. Each school needs to appreciate the special pastoral

**Kindness**

**Honesty**

**Respect**

circumstances of its own community, including families, and then to mobilise the resources, personnel and programs needed to meet those pastoral needs.

### **Definition**

Pastoral Care in Catholic Schools means enhancing the dignity of each person within a Catholic faith community. It is concerned with maximising learning and growth and developing the beliefs, values, attitudes, knowledge, skills and practices to enable all to become inner-directed, contributing members of God's creation.

### **Aims**

- To continue to improve curriculum and instructional practices that will have positive effects on student attitude and behaviour.
- To affirm teachers' rights to teach and permit effective and enjoyable learning to take place.

All members of St Bernadette's are called to strive for a pastorally caring environment – staff, parents, students, the wider school and parish community.

### **Principles**

The function of Pastoral Care at St. Bernadette's Primary School is to:

1. **Provide an environment, a curriculum and a set of practices based on the Gospels.**
  - a. *Catholic education draws from approaches that understand a school to be a community, committed to the students' development as fully integrated people through educational means.*
  - b. Religion lessons are held daily, along with regular school masses. The Sacramental programmes are conducted with the full involvement of the families, priest and class teachers.
  
2. **Enable students to attain the beliefs, values, attitudes, knowledge, skills and practices which will enable them to achieve Christ's vision of the human person.**
  - a. *Every Catholic school community's concern will be students' integrated development as Christian men and women - as responsible, inner-directed individuals of Christian virtue, capable of free choice and of making value-judgements enlightened by a formed Christian conscience.*
  - b. At St. Bernadette's School we run a Behaviour Management plan based on caring for others and considering their feelings, following the Restorative Justice pattern. We encourage children to think of others, to make right choices and work cooperatively together.
  
3. **Ensure that the care and development of each person takes place within the Catholic faith community.**
  - a. *In the school, students should see Christian values actively lived rather than merely spoken of, and experience them in sincere interpersonal relationships.*
  - b. At St. Bernadette's we pride ourselves on our welcoming and inclusive attitude towards all members of the community. Children are encouraged to always be polite,

friendly and considerate to each other. Disputes are dealt with quickly and the atmosphere at school among both adults and children is warm and caring.

**4. Be concerned with the nurturing and well-being of all who impact on the school community.**

- a. *A school's pastoral dimension will show itself in the mutual care and support administrators and staff show towards each other, as well as the care they all show for their students. From the pastoral dimension of the total school life, students learn their own value and dignity.*
- b. We have regular Staff Masses and morning prayers together. Most teachers meet regularly in the Staff Room to share time together. Staff members are friendly towards each other, both publicly and privately and few staff members leave the school once they arrive! Staff members treat students with kindness and consideration. The relationship between Staff and parents is very positive and we rely on parents for help in the classroom and with fundraising.

**The total development of every individual is important.**

To achieve this aim we strive to:

- provide a Catholic school that is Christ centred
- support the spiritual, intellectual, physical, emotional and social growth of all members of the school community
- help all members develop a healthy attitude towards life
- acknowledge that all members have the right to feel important and are worthy of love and respect
- let children know that they are valued even though their behaviour may be unacceptable at times
- assist those children, and other members of the school community, who may need extra care because of a particular problem or circumstances in their life
- acknowledge the personal and professional contributions of staff to the life of the school
- develop in all members a sense of belonging and commitment to the school community and to one another
- provide a safe school environment
- recognise that all members have a right to be treated courteously and respectfully at all times.

**ELEMENTS OF PASTORAL CARE**

*The Religious Dimension of the Catholic School infuses all aspects of school life. The full dignity of the human person is enhanced when the elements of Environment, Policy and Curriculum are interlinked.*

**Environment**

The environment at St. Bernadette's School is well cared for. The grounds are kept clean and tidy; work is displayed in classrooms and the school office; property is respected and items put away when not in use. The atmosphere is friendly and cheerful.

*Life of Faith*

St. Bernadette's School places great importance on active prayer, participation in the Liturgy and involvement in the Sacramental programmes. We have daily prayer sessions, regular liturgical celebrations and recognition of children preparing for the various sacraments. The preparation of

sacraments being shared between parents and the school is seen as a priority. We annually celebrate St. Bernadette's feast day and recognise other feast days and the traditions of the Church.

### Community Dimensions

Relationships among staff and pupils are warm and friendly. Many ex pupils come back to visit and also to work here for work experience. Parents are welcomed and often help out in classrooms and the Canteen. The Parish Priest visits to meet with staff and pupils. We also collect money for charity each term through a Free Dress day.

All pupils are included in school activities, as we aim to live up to our school motto of Kindness, Honesty and Respect for all individuals.

### Administrative Sector

The Staff support each other in good times and bad. Meetings are held to discuss pupils being passed on at the end of each year, and also throughout the year if the need arises. Collaborative decision making is encouraged with everyone able to share his/her opinions in staff meetings. The Staff regularly work with "Buddy" teachers to share responsibility and ideas. Policies are discussed regularly with feedback being encouraged. The Behaviour Management plan has been evolved after much consultation with staff members.

## **Policy and Practice**

St. Bernadette's employs practices that enhance the dignity of the human person. The principles of Pastoral Care are reflected in all policies. In particular:

### **Pastoral Care Practices for Students**

We endeavour to nurture and enrich all aspects of student care and management whether physical, spiritual, emotional or academic. The needs of individual students are taken into consideration, with care and compassion being shown in times of worry, need or grief.

- The Religious Education program aims at integrating faith and life as well as faith and culture.
- School Masses, prayer services, paraliturgies and choir are held regularly and children are encouraged to take an active part in these liturgies. Parents are invited to attend.
- The School Counsellor runs programmes on conflict resolution, relationships, self esteem, social skills, bullying
- The School Nurse assists teachers with information about drug education, diet, sun protection, etc.
- Assemblies are held regularly to celebrate learning. Parents are invited to attend.
- A support program is in place for children with learning difficulties.
- A merit award system recognises achievements with certificates being presented at assemblies. Care is taken to ensure all children receive an award each year and every attempt is made to notify parents when their child receives an award so they may attend.
- A 'buddy system' exists between the primary and Pre Primary classes.
- A school camp is run each year in Year Six. This supplements the curriculum and provides opportunities for group bonding.
- Kindergarten children are introduced to school in a 'staggered intake' so they are not overwhelmed by the number of children in the class.
- Staff have regular updates and training in First Aid.
- Playground supervision ensures a safe environment for the children.

- Students are given special responsibilities to develop leadership and concern for others; e.g. library monitors, sports captains, committees.
- Handover is in place to allow teachers to pass on relevant information from teachers of one year level to the next.
- The Pastoral Care Team will work together to assist in ensuring that the needs of students at risk [emotionally, physically, educationally, psychologically] are overseen and managed in a responsible and caring manner throughout the year. This group, comprised of the Principal, Assistant Principal, Coordinator of Learning, School Counsellor, Literacy Coordinator and Special Needs Coordinator, meet every fortnight.

### **Pastoral Care Practices for Parents**

At St. Bernadette's we pride ourselves on the level of parental involvement at our school. Reporting and communication between staff and parents is regular and ongoing. The fortnightly school newsletter is informative and is e-mailed direct to parents/carers. We have a very active and helpful Parents and Friends Committee and School Board.

- A Parent Information Book will be available to parents to inform them of school procedures and policies. *This is a 2011 Administration priority.*
- Information evenings are organised to keep parents informed; e.g. introduction to the new school year, sacramental programs, camp etc.
- Parents are invited to attend school liturgies to share in the spiritual life of the school.
- Parents are assisted with their children's sacramental preparation; i.e. Reconciliation, Eucharist and Confirmation.
- School assemblies give parents the opportunity to share in school celebrations and the children's achievements.
- A fortnightly newsletter facilitates communication between home and school.
- The Parents and Friends Association meets monthly to provide a collective voice for the school community.
- The Principal shows new parents around the school to familiarise them with school facilities.
- Parental involvement is welcomed and encouraged.
- Student interviews are held at the end of term one to enable parents to meet with teachers and discuss student progress. Interviews are available by request at any other time during the year. The interview is scheduled to accommodate in particular, the needs of parents with more than one child in the school and with work commitments.
- School diaries are used in the primary years to maintain communication between teacher and parent.
- Students are supervised prior to the school day in the undercover area from 8:15 to 8:30am.
- After school, teachers supervise children as they get into their cars to ensure traffic moves safely through the school grounds (see Duty Roster).
- A School Counsellor (part time) is employed to assist with personal or family concerns.
- Discounted school fees are available to parents suffering significant financial hardship. Confidences are respected as only the Principal and Finance Officer know of discounts given. Personal pride is maintained in that all families pay some fees.

### **Pastoral Care Practices for Staff**

The school aims to employ staff members who will endeavour to practise our Vision Statement, maintain professional standards and share their faith with others. The continuation of Professional Development is encouraged, particularly in the realm of Pastoral Care.

- Staff prayer is held each Wednesday afternoon from 3:20 until 3:30 pm.
- A staff reflection day is held annually to give opportunities for personal and faith development.
- The Parish Priest is a member of our school community.
- A staff induction enables new staff to settle quickly into the school with new members also being given a Staff Handbook that contains school procedures and policies. New staff to St Bernadette's will also attend 'Faith Story and Witness' sessions.
- Professional development is available to staff to support ongoing education and support with new programs and ideas.
- A School Counsellor is available to staff to assist with personal and professional concerns in addition to CEO-funded services.
- A social committee coordinates and promotes staff social events.
- A mentor is allocated to each new staff member.

### **Curriculum**

At St. Bernadette's we aim to consider the needs of all students at the school. The curriculum is adapted to meet the needs of each pupil with appropriate methods of assessment, evaluation and reporting, suitable to the children, being utilised. We aim to help each and every child develop on his/her personal faith journey, through the development of good life skills, attitude, beliefs and values.

The curriculum aims to cover the needs of pupils academically, emotionally, physically and spiritually. Education Assistants work with individual children and groups to support learning in the classroom. Merit Awards are handed out at assembly each week and sporting achievements are recognised at assemblies.

We have regular incursions and excursions for all age groups with Camp/Retreats for the older children

### **Conclusion**

Our Pastoral Care Policy, like our Behaviour Management Policy, is reviewed regularly, in the light of school needs and the success of current practices.