



ENROLMENT POLICY FOR SYSTEMIC CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

1.0 RATIONALE

The Enrolment Policy for systemic Catholic schools¹ in the Archdiocese of Sydney is set within the context of the Church's mission to evangelise, and is founded upon the Vision and Mission Statements for Catholic schools. Catholic schools have a unique role in helping families to nurture and develop their Catholic faith, within the context of their parish² and regional communities. As inclusive and evangelising communities, they also welcome families from other faith traditions where this is possible.

The Catholic school participates in the evangelizing mission of the Church and is the privileged environment in which Christian education is carried out. In this way "Catholic schools are at once places of evangelization, of complete formation, of inculturation, of apprenticeship in a lively dialogue between young people of different religions and social backgrounds."

The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium

Many families are continuing the tradition of looking to Catholic schools for the education of their children. Enrolment numbers within the Archdiocese of Sydney have witnessed a steady growth in recent times. In a significant number of schools demand exceeds the number of available places. The student population broadly reflects the diversity of Australian life and culture, with a significant enrolment of students from non-English speaking backgrounds, from indigenous cultures, and with special learning needs.

Sydney Catholic schools strive to respond to the needs of all students, within the constraints of the available teaching and material resources. They recognise the entitlement of all students to access educational opportunities that nurture the Catholic faith, expand life choices, cater for the disadvantaged, and challenge all students to reach their full potential.

This policy exists to ensure the equitable allocation of student places according to the Vision and Mission of Catholic schools.

Our Vision Statement: As partners in Catholic education, we commit ourselves to developing authentic Catholic schools which:

- *are founded on the person of Jesus Christ and enlivened by the Gospel*
- *highlight the relevance of our faith to life and contemporary culture*
- *are embedded within the community of believers, and share in the evangelising mission of the Church*
- *are committed to the development of the whole person.*

¹ Refer to Explanatory Notes: 7.1 Catholic Education

² Refer to Explanatory Notes: 7.4 Parish Community

Our Mission Statement: As partners in Catholic education, we commit ourselves to our students by:

- *celebrating being Catholic in Australia*
- *ensuring quality teaching and learning*
- *making a difference in our world.*

2.0 GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The guiding principles of this policy provide direction for the Principal and the Enrolment Committee in determining the processes and procedures for an individual school when considering enrolment of students³. They serve as a basis to assess specific circumstances within the school context where demand exceeds the number of available places.

- 2.1** Embedded within the parish community, Sydney Catholic schools are committed to the development of the whole person and share with the parish in the evangelising mission of the Church.
- 2.2** Sydney Catholic schools, as part of each parish community, have a responsibility to support parents/caregivers in honouring the commitment to practise their faith, which they undertook on behalf of their child/ren at the time of Baptism.
- 2.3** The Parish Priest has responsibility under Canon Law for Catholic schools and the pastoral care of all involved in the school community. Therefore the implementation of the enrolment policy requires close collaboration between the Parish Priest and the school.
- 2.4** On enrolment, all parents and students commit to supporting the Catholic ethos of the school, participating in the Religious Education program and in the prayer and liturgical life of the school.
- 2.5** The support and nurturing of the family unit is fundamental to the pastoral and spiritual welfare of each child. Wherever feasible, once a family member has been accepted into a Sydney Catholic school, priority in enrolment will be given to ensuring the enrolment of siblings.
- 2.6** The preferential option for the poor and marginalised is fundamental in Catholic schools. Sydney Catholic schools have a responsibility to care for those who are poor, disadvantaged or considered most at risk. No Catholic child will be denied a Catholic education because of a family's genuine inability to pay fees.
- 2.7** Sydney Catholic schools are committed to the inclusion of children with special needs⁴ and will observe all relevant State and Federal legislation.
- 2.8** Sydney Catholic schools have adopted an explicit policy of providing educational opportunities for indigenous students through the provision of a bursary program. Indigenous families may apply for enrolment on the basis of 'special pastoral circumstances.'⁵

³ Refer to Explanatory Notes: 7.1 Catholic Education

⁴ Refer to Explanatory Notes: 7.3 Special Needs

⁵ Refer to Explanatory Notes: 7.5 Special Pastoral Circumstances

- 2.9** Wherever feasible, students who attend a Sydney Catholic primary school should have the opportunity to continue their education in a secondary college within the Catholic system where facilities exist to do so and where the family has supported the ethos of the Catholic Church.
- 2.10** Sydney Catholic schools are open to all Catholic families, as well as families from Orthodox churches, families from other Christian Churches, and those from other faith traditions or non-religious backgrounds who are prepared to support the ethos, values and liturgical and sacramental practices of the Catholic Church.
- 2.11** Sydney Catholic schools have a co-responsibility to ensure a sustainable level of enrolments for each school within the Archdiocesan system, so as to maximise the opportunity for Catholic families to access Catholic schools.

3.0 POLICY

- 3.1** All Archdiocesan systemic Catholic schools in the Archdiocese of Sydney will apply the Guiding Principles, Procedures and Enrolment Criteria outlined in this policy.
- 3.2** In special circumstances, and after consultation with the Parish Priest, a school may seek approval from the Regional Director to modify this enrolment policy to cater for the unique context of the local Catholic community.
- 3.3** Each school must have an Enrolment Committee to provide advice to the Principal during major enrolment intake periods.
- 3.4** The Enrolment Committee should apply the Guiding Principles, Procedures and Enrolment Criteria in a fair and consistent manner in accord with the relevant Federal and State anti-discrimination legislation.
- 3.5** The membership of the Enrolment Committee will be broadly representative of key stakeholder groups in the school.
- 3.6** The Parish Priest will be provided with the opportunity to be a full participant in all enrolment decisions, particularly through membership of the Enrolment Committee.
- 3.7** Where demand exceeds the number of available positions within a school, the priority for allocating enrolment places is to be in accordance with the criteria listed below.
- 3.8** On enrolment, all parents and students are required to give an undertaking that they will support the Archbishop's Charter for Catholic Schools.

3.9 Enrolment Criteria: Systemic Primary Schools

Enrolments are to be made in accordance with the following criteria:

- 3.9.1 Baptised Catholic children of regularly worshipping Catholic families⁶ with strong demonstrable links to the local designated Catholic parish or parishes.⁷
- 3.9.2 Siblings of children already attending the school whose families have demonstrated ongoing support for the ethos and values of the Catholic Church.
- 3.9.3 Children of families who have 'special pastoral circumstances'⁸ as assessed by the Enrolment Committee or, where appropriate, the school Principal and/or the Parish Priest in conjunction with the Principal.
- 3.9.4 Children of Catholic families not covered above, or who are outside the local designated Catholic parish.
- 3.9.5 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.
- 3.9.6 Children of regularly worshipping families from other Christian denominations who have strong demonstrable links to their faith community and who are prepared to support the ethos and values of the Catholic Church.
- 3.9.7 Children of Orthodox families who are prepared to support the ethos and values of the Catholic Church.
- 3.9.8 Children of families from other Christian denominations who are prepared to support the ethos and values of the Catholic Church.
- 3.9.9 Children of families from other faith traditions or non religious backgrounds who are prepared to support the ethos and values of the Catholic Church.

3.10 Enrolment Criteria: Systemic Secondary Colleges

In accordance with the guiding principles, the following criteria are provided to support Enrolment Committees in the discernment of the priority in which enrolment applications are accepted.

- 3.10.1 Baptised Catholic children of regularly worshipping Catholic families⁵ with strong demonstrable links to the local designated feeder parish or parishes⁶.
- 3.10.2 Siblings of children already attending the college whose families have demonstrated ongoing support for the ethos and values of the Catholic Church.

⁶ Refer to Explanatory Notes: 7.2 Catholic Families

⁷ Refer to Explanatory Notes: 7.4 Parish Community and 7.6 Designated Feeder Parish/Feeder Schools

⁸ Refer to Explanatory Notes: 7.5 Special Pastoral Circumstances

- 3.10.3 Children of families currently enrolled at the designated Catholic feeder schools⁹ who have demonstrated ongoing support for the ethos and values of the Catholic Church.
- 3.10.4 Children of families who have 'special pastoral circumstances'¹⁰ as assessed by the Enrolment Committee or, where appropriate, the school Principal and/or priests of associated parishes in conjunction with the Principal.
- 3.10.5 Children of Catholic families not covered above or who are outside the local designated Catholic feeder schools/parishes.
- 3.10.6 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.
- 3.10.7 Children of regularly worshipping families from other Christian denominations who have strong demonstrable links to their faith community and who are prepared to support the ethos and values of the Catholic Church.
- 3.10.8 Children of Orthodox families who are prepared to support the ethos and values of the Catholic Church.
- 3.10.9 Children of families from other Christian denominations who are prepared to support the ethos and values of the Catholic Church.
- 3.10.10 Children of families from other faith traditions or non-religious backgrounds who are prepared to support the ethos and values of the Catholic Church.

4.0 PROCEDURES

This section sets out the operational aspects of implementing this policy, which may be varied from time to time by the Executive Director of Catholic Schools in response to changing circumstances. Principals and Enrolment Committees are required to follow the procedures current at any point in time.

- 4.1** The Enrolment Committee will process applications received during the major enrolment intake period for any year. Individual enrolments received outside the enrolment period are delegated to the school Principal.
- 4.2** The school will advertise the closing date for the official enrolment period, so that the Enrolment Committee can assess the priority of applications. This does not preclude the Principal from accepting students to fill any vacancies after that date.
- 4.3** The Enrolment Committee Guidelines will outline the roles and responsibilities of the Committee.
- 4.4** The Principal is responsible for ensuring that the school's Enrolment Committee is cognisant of relevant legislation and the principles of procedural fairness.

⁹ Refer to Explanatory Notes: 7.6 Designated Feeder Parish/Feeder Schools

¹⁰ Refer to Explanatory Notes: 7.5 Special Pastoral Circumstance

- 4.5 Membership of the Enrolment Committee will include the Parish Priest or his representative, the school Principal or delegate, and a parent who is an active member of the local parish community.
- 4.6 When enrolling students with special needs, the student must in the first instance meet the usual eligibility requirements for enrolment.
- 4.7 Wherever possible, in situations where demand exceeds the available number of places, Principals will seek to assist students whom they are unable to accept to find a position in an alternate Catholic school.

5.0 BASES OF DISCRETION

- 5.1 In exceptional circumstances when considering an individual enrolment application, a Principal, in consultation with the Parish Priest, may make an exception to the priority criteria as long as the decision is consistent with the overall spirit and rationale of this policy.
- 5.2 Principals wishing to vary the criteria for enrolment in response to exceptional circumstances (eg Consortium schools to a Trade Training Centre, siblings applying for a neighbouring single-sex school) within their school community must consult their Parish Priest and receive the approval of their Regional Director.

6.0 EVALUATION AND REVIEW

This policy will be reviewed by December 2016 in consultation with Principals, Parish Priests and Catholic Education Office staff.

7.0 EXPLANATORY NOTES

7.1 Catholic Education

- 7.1.1 For the purpose of this document, education in systemic Catholic schools in the Archdiocese of Sydney will be conducted in compliance with all applicable legislation (eg the NSW Education Reform Act 1990) and the requirements of the Catholic Education Office Sydney.
- 7.1.2 There are 167 Catholic schools in the Archdiocese of Sydney. 147 of these belong to the system of schools administered by the Catholic Education Office (CEO) Sydney and are covered by this policy. The other 20 Catholic schools in the Archdiocese are Congregational schools run independently by Religious Congregations. These schools develop their own enrolment policies and procedures and are not covered by the provisions of this document.
- 7.1.3 By law students must commence school before they turn six years of age. School entry age is no longer restrained 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 Government legislated to raise the minimum school leaving age from 15 to 17, unless students meet the alternative criteria

of undertaking approved education or training or participation in paid work for at least 25 hours perweek.

7.2 Catholic Families

7.2.1 Catholic families are defined as families in which the children are baptised or in which at least one parent is a Catholic and both parents are supportive of a Catholic education for their child.

7.2.2 Catholic families include families of Eastern Catholic Churches.

7.3 Special Needs

7.3.1 A student may be deemed as having special needs if, in endeavouring to offer the student equitable access to educational opportunities, modifications need to be made to curricula, assessment procedures, school premises or modes of course delivery, or if the provision of special equipment or suitably trained staff is required.

7.4 Parish Community

7.4.1 In discerning strong demonstrable links to the parish community, consideration could include regular participation in the liturgical life of the parish; active participation in parish-based sacramental programs; contribution to parish ministries; participation in parish community building and outreach programs; or other significant involvement as deemed appropriate by the Enrolment Committee.

7.4.2 Parish community includes the parish of regular worship or the parish defined by residential geographical boundaries. In special situations, some families may live within the geographic area of the parish whilst worshipping regularly in communities aligned to cultural or ethnic groups. In the case of such applications, with the support of their pastor, their parish involvement would be assessed as meeting the criteria for parish participation.

7.5 Special Pastoral Circumstances

7.5.1 In discerning criteria that indicate the nature and extent of 'special pastoral circumstances' consideration could include children with special needs; indigenous students; refugee or other marginalised families; links to the parish or school communities through the involvement of grandparents and the extended family; the pastoral care of the student due to family dislocation; prior family links to the school; and any other special circumstances as judged appropriate by the Enrolment Committee.

7.6 Designated Feeder Parish/Feeder Schools

- 7.6.1 In the Sydney Archdiocese, there are a number of parish communities that do not have a local parish primary school. In these instances, in accordance with the support document Primary/ Secondary Colleges Pathways and Feeder Parishes document, families may make application to the designated Catholic parish primary school and be considered equally with the other families from the school's local parish.
- 7.6.2 Traditionally, Catholic systemic secondary colleges have been founded and supported by the combined efforts of a number of parish communities in a particular location within the Archdiocese. Therefore, Catholic systemic secondary colleges have strong pastoral links to a number of parishes and primary schools in their local areas.
- 7.6.3 In most cases Catholic parishes and primary schools feed into one or more Catholic systemic secondary colleges, as outlined in the support document Primary/ Secondary Colleges Pathways and Feeder Parishes document. However, in some areas of the Archdiocese of Sydney, Catholic Congregational colleges service the local area and are not subject to the provisions of this policy.
- 7.6.4 Enrolment of students from Catholic feeder primary schools into secondary colleges assumes that the student has attended the local Catholic primary school for a minimum of two years, except in special circumstances such as family relocation or as judged appropriate by the Enrolment Committee.

7.7 Application of Secondary Enrolment Criteria

- 7.7.1 In the event of a secondary college receiving a greater number of applications from families in their designated parish(es) or feeder schools than there are vacancies, the Enrolment Committee will further apply the Enrolment Criteria.
- 7.7.2 Wherever possible, students who are unable to be placed in their school of first choice will be assisted to find a place in an another Catholic school.

8.0 SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

- 8.1** Primary /Secondary College Pathways and Feeder Parishes
- 8.2** Secondary/ Primary College Pathways and Feeder Parishes

9.0 POLICY CLASSIFICATION

9.1 Policy No: 1/2011

9.2 Policy Audience: Public Domain

9.3 Policy Review by: December 2016

9.4 Policy Approval: This Policy was approved by the Sydney Archdiocesan Catholic Schools Board on 27 July 2011.

9.5 This Policy supersedes any previous Sydney Catholic Education Office Enrolment Policies. 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.

9.6 Commencement Date: 1 January 2012

10.0 RELATED POLICIES/ GUIDELINES/ PROCEDURES

10.1 Complaints Resolution Policy (Currently under review)

10.2 Eastern Catholic Churches

10.3 Enrolment Committee Guidelines

10.4 Enrolment of Students with Special Needs