

- all students are empowered to engage actively with the curriculum and the life of the school
- a deeper understanding of the complex causes of social, emotional or spiritual disadvantage is developed.

Identification of and response to community members with particular needs through:

- inclusive enrolment processes and supportive practices that are responsive to the needs of all students
- positive behaviour support processes especially for those students with high and complex needs

- engagement of students and families with supportive community networks beyond the school
- access to flexible curriculum structures and programs
- access to essential learning tools and targeted assistance
- intentional and equitable resource allocations
- provision of community based learning opportunities that nurture an ethos of justice, connection and inclusion.

GLOSSARY

Community based learning – the development of community within the school and strengthening the school's role within the local community, through the formation of effective and reciprocal relationships; where local people (family, local residents etc), community facilities, agencies and services, training, local businesses and employment providers are considered and utilised as important partners to ensure that all students, especially those who are on the margins of society, out-of-home and/or disengaged from learning, have exposure to learning opportunities that are contextualised, meaningful and life giving utilising flexible learning structures.

Inclusion – is concerned with all children and young people in schools; it is focused on presence, participation and achievement; inclusion and exclusion are linked together such that inclusion involves the active combating of exclusion; and inclusion is seen as a never-ending process. Thus an inclusive school is one that is on the move, rather than one that has reached a perfect state.

Orphan – the word 'orphan' is used over forty times in the Bible. Orphan refers to children and young people who are voiceless, powerless and without rights.

Students who are disengaged – those students who are not able to engage actively and confidently with the curriculum.

Students who are out-of-home – those students who are not necessarily without a roof over their heads, but who are not living with their parents on a permanent basis, but are living, for example, with their grandparents, or are in foster care, or youth shelters, or couch surfing etc.

Students at the margins – students who are relegated to, confined to, a lower or outer limit of society due to reasons such as: violence at home, mental health issues, being parentless, behavioural issues, learning difficulties, substance abuse, cultural discrimination, sexual identity, material poverty.

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Archdiocese of Brisbane
Catholic Education Council

Students who are at the Margins of Society and/or Out-of-Home

MAY 2009

Policy Statement FOR BRISBANE CATHOLIC EDUCATION SCHOOLS





STUDENTS WHO ARE AT THE MARGINS OF SOCIETY AND/OR OUT-OF-HOME

FOREWORD

Our supreme example of care for people, especially the poor and needy, is manifest in the life of Jesus. He reached out to all people and welcomed them into God's family. Above all however He told them of God's love and proved it by His very actions. Each one of us is called to do the same and such care needs to be exercised by staff and students engaged in the enormously important area of Catholic education. Through scripture and the Church we learn about God's care for people, especially the little ones of the world.

In Psalm 82 of the Old Testament the psalmist pleads to God for justice for those at the margins of society and/or out-of-home.

*Give justice to the weak and the orphan;
maintain the right of the lowly and the destitute.
rescue the weak and the needy;
deliver them from the hand of the wicked (Psalm 82: 3-4).*

In the New Testament, the letter of James stresses that caring for those who experience powerlessness and voicelessness is at the core of religion

Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father is this: to care for orphans and widows in their distress (James 1:27).

The Congregation for Catholic Education called upon the Catholic school to give special consideration to students who live on the margins

First and foremost the Church offers its educational service to the poor or those who are deprived of family help and affection or those who are far from the faith (The Congregation for Catholic Education, 1977, p44).

Our Catholic schools strongly endorse the Church's teaching of preferential option for people who are disconnected from society. As a vibrant Catholic Christian community, we are committed to being proactive in welcoming, valuing, and supporting students who live on the margins of our society and/or out-of-home. Justice in action requires that as Christian educators we work for equitable treatment of all.

Implementing this policy will challenge our staff and parent bodies to be innovative and resourceful in responding to the needs of students who are at the margins of society and/or out-of-home.

I commend this policy to those involved in Catholic education in the Archdiocese.

Sincerely in Christ

Most Rev John Bathersby DD
ARCHBISHOP OF BRISBANE
May 2009

INTRODUCTION

The Catholic School is

...a school for all, with special attention for those who are weakest.¹

Therefore students who are socio-economically poor and at the margins must be assisted with education, training and Christian formation.

In the New Testament, James stresses that caring for those who experience powerlessness and voicelessness is at the core of religion:

Religion that is pure and undefiled before God the Father is this: to care for orphans and widows in their distress (James 1:27).

Current research into the nature, extent and needs of out-of-home, marginalised and disengaged students revealed significant numbers of these students attend our community of primary and secondary schools in the Archdiocese.

Out-of-home and marginalised students therefore require additional support in order to engage with and successfully achieve appropriate outcomes from their educational experiences. A more systematic and policy driven basis for resourcing is needed for this purpose.

RATIONALE

The *Vision Statement for Catholic Education in the Archdiocese of Brisbane* states that Catholic schools

...educate for a transformed world ... exercising a preferential option for the poor and the marginalised.²

Catholic school communities, committing themselves to the priorities of the Strategic Renewal Framework³ welcome and are intent on improving learning outcomes for students who are at the margins of our society, out-of-home and/or disengaged from education.

Catholic Christian educators work in partnership with individuals, groups and organisations of goodwill to ensure that students who are marginalised have access to all available support in a caring community. This work reflects the vision and mission of Jesus as articulated in the Gospels and is respectful of the special spirituality of these young people.

CONSEQUENCES

This policy is implemented in partnership with families and others in the broader educational community through:

Structures, practices and processes in which:

- The needs of students at the margins and/or out-of-home or disengaged from education and their parents or caregivers, are clearly recognised in:
 - policies and guidelines
 - renewal processes
 - pastoral care programs
 - curriculum planning
 - role descriptions and duty statements for key positions
 - resourcing provisions.

Promotion of just, informed and inclusive communities in which:

- a spirit of welcome, inclusion and partnership is encouraged through initiatives that nurture community connectedness
- the wellbeing of all individuals is promoted

¹ *The Catholic school on the threshold of the third millennium.* (1998) pg 18

² *The Vision Statement for Catholic Education in the Archdiocese of Brisbane.* (2004)

³ *Strategic Renewal Framework 2007 - 2011.* (2006)