

# Inclusive practices for students in Queensland Catholic schools



## Position Statement

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### Introduction

Catholic schools share a role in preaching the Good News *“I have come that you may have life and have it to the full” (John 10:10).*

Queensland Catholic schools have a strong commitment to respecting and valuing student diversity, inclusion and wellbeing, catering for students with a range of attributes and experiences. These may include ability, culture, race, socio-economic status, ethnicity, religion, gender identity, and sexual orientation. Our diverse student population enriches the communal life of Catholic schools.

### Definition

For the purpose of this position statement the term ‘inclusive practices’ is defined as the provision of a safe, supportive and collaborative learning environment responsive to the needs of all students. The learning environment should enable all students to access education that is appropriate, equitable and empowering, such that they can engage with the daily life of the school and curriculum, demonstrate their knowledge and strengths, and maximise participation through quality learning opportunities.

### Rationale

Queensland Catholic Education Commission believes that the principles of inclusion are predicated on the intention to provide an educational environment that promotes the human dignity of each student within a supportive Christian community. The principles of inclusion recognise:

- practice that is informed by Catholic social teaching, legislative requirements, educational philosophy and societal expectations
- the uniqueness and the diversity of students as children of God
- the need for belonging within a community underpinned by respectful relationships
- a whole school approach to planning, curriculum development and school organisation
- access to reasonable differentiated resources and learning opportunities, to enable all students to engage purposefully, and to experience learning success

*An education in the fullness of humanity should be the defining feature of Catholic schools... An inclusive education finds a place for all and does not select in an elitist way the beneficiaries of its efforts.*

(Pope Francis address to the Association of Catholic School Parents, 2015)

### Position Statement

The Queensland Catholic Education Commission recommends that Catholic School Authorities commit to meeting the diverse needs of all students by establishing policies and procedures that embed inclusive practices and reflect the ethos and mission of Catholic schools and Church teaching.

## Implications

Catholic School Authorities and schools in Queensland will give consideration to:

- enrolment applications from families “*who identify with and seek the values of Christ*” (Catholic Schools for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, 2001) in accordance with diocesan and school enrolment policy
- developing enrolment policies and procedures that promote inclusion
- having enrolment processes which identify the student’s specific needs, adjustments required, whether adjustments are reasonable and can be made without creating unjustifiable hardship for any party
- implementing strategies that reflect the call by Pope Francis to “*foster harmony in diversity*” (Pope Francis address to the Association of Catholic School Parents, 2015)
- developing cultures of reflection and ongoing evaluation to ensure inclusive practices are meeting the needs of all students
- providing opportunities for professional development of staff to support the full engagement of all students with diverse needs including high potential learners and irrespective of gender identity and/or sexual orientation
- building respectful partnerships between students, families and educators to engage in collaborative planning and decision making
- seeking to develop collaborative partnerships and service agreements with agencies beyond the school and the school authority to support the needs of students when and where appropriate
- providing flexible system approaches, school structures, procedures and curriculum to facilitate options and pathways for students
- providing uniform options, in consultation with their school communities, which include shorts and pants for all students
- creating physical environments that are accessible, stimulating, safe, respectful and welcoming
- supporting and assisting students and their families to discern appropriate educational arrangements, particularly in times of transition.

## References

The Bishops of Queensland (2001) *The Queensland Bishops Project – Catholic Schools for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*. Queensland Catholic Education Commission

Address of His Holiness Pope Francis to the Association of Catholic School Parents (AGESC) 2015. Retrieved 26/06/2019 [http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2015/december/documents/papa-francesco\\_20151205\\_agesc.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2015/december/documents/papa-francesco_20151205_agesc.html)

Human Rights Act 2019, Queensland

<https://www.legislation.qld.gov.au/view/whole/html/asmade/act-2019-005>

Inclusive Education policy statement

<https://education.qld.gov.au/student/inclusive-education/Documents/policy-statement-booklet.pdf>

**Date of first publication:** August 2014

**Amended:** February and August 2019

**Next review:** August 2024