

Inclusive practices in Queensland Catholic schools



Position Statement

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 are committed to respecting and valuing diversity, inclusion, and wellbeing, catering to people with a range of abilities, attributes and experiences. These may include people with disability, gifted and talented students, people with culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, people from a range of socio-economic backgrounds and faith communities, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples and students who identify as gender diverse or LGBTIQ+. Our diverse community enriches the communal life of Catholic schools.

Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration 2019 provides two national goals for schooling:

Goal 1: The Australian education system promotes excellence and equity.

Goal 2: All young Australians become confident and creative individuals, successful lifelong learners, and active and informed members of the community.

The national goals for schooling underpin the *Inclusive practices in Queensland Catholic schools position statement*.

Definition

For this position statement the term ‘inclusive practices’ is defined as the provision of a safe, supportive, and collaborative learning environments responsive to the human rights of all people. The learning environment should enable all students to access and participate 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 teaching and learning opportunities.

Rationale

Queensland Catholic Education Commission (QCEC) believes that the principles of inclusion are predicated on the delivery of an educational environment that promotes the human dignity of each student within a supportive Christian community. The principles of inclusion are premised on a strengths-based student-centred approach and recognise:

- the ten dimensions of *belonging*¹ within a community underpinned by respectful relationships
- practice that is informed by Catholic social teaching, legislative requirements, educational philosophy and a human rights approach
- the uniqueness and the diversity of students as children made in the image of God
- a whole school approach to personalised planning, teaching and learning, curriculum development and school organisation
- access to reasonable adjustments and/or differentiated curriculum, resources that are inclusive and culturally safe, and equitable learning opportunities, to enable all students to engage purposefully, and experience learning success in all aspects of school life.

An education in the fullness of humanity should be the defining feature of Catholic school. An inclusive

¹10 dimensions of belonging 1. present; 2. invited; 3. welcomed; 4. cared for; 5. supported; 6. accepted; 7. known; 8. befriended; 9. needed; 10. loved (Carter & Biggs, 2021)

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 Australian and Queensland Governments expect Catholic School Authorities (CSAs) to commit to meeting the diverse educational needs of all students by establishing policies and procedures that embed inclusive practices in all aspects of schooling. QCEC recommends that these policies and procedures reflect the ethos and mission of Catholic schools and Church teaching.

Implications

Queensland CSAs will ensure a culture of human rights and inclusion to:

- enrolment applications from families *“who identify with and seek the values of Christ”* (Catholic Schools for the 21st Century, 2001) as per diocesan and school enrolment policy
- developing enrolment policies and procedures that embed inclusion and equity to minimise the risk of discrimination, bullying and harassment
- having enrolment processes that identify the student’s specific needs and reasonable adjustments required to enable access to and participation in schooling (Disability Standards for Education, 2005)
- 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 review and evaluation to ensure inclusive practices are effective in maximising educational outcomes and the wellbeing of all students
- providing opportunities for the professional development of all staff to support the full engagement of all students across a diverse range of personal characteristics and experiences.
- building respectful and consultative partnerships between students, families/kin and or associate, and educators to engage in collaborative planning and decision-making
- seeking to develop collaborative partnerships with non-school agencies and the school authority to support the educational and wellbeing needs of all students
- providing flexible system approaches, school structures, procedures and curriculum to facilitate learning options and pathways for all students
- providing a range of uniform options for all students
- creating physical environments that are accessible, safe, respectful and welcoming
- consulting with students and their parents/carers/kin and/or associates to plan, monitor and review educational arrangements, particularly in times of transition
- supporting and assisting school leaders to embed educational arrangements that are supportive of students and their parents/carers/kin and/or associates
- supporting school staff to meet their obligations – moral and legal, to embed inclusive practices in all aspects of school life.

Supporting documents

- [Anti-Discrimination Act 1991 \(Qld\)](#)
- [Australia’s Disability Strategy 2021 – 2023 \(Cwlth\)](#)
- [Education \(General Provisions\) Act 2006 \(Qld\)](#)
- [Education \(General Provisions\) Regulation 2017 \(Qld\)](#)
- [Declaration of Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith “Dignita Infinita” on Human Dignity 8/04/2024](#)
- [Disability Discrimination Act \(1992\) \(Cwlth\)](#)
- [Human Rights Act 2019 \(Qld\)](#)
- [Laudato Si 2015 \(Pope Francis\)](#)
- [National Agreement on Closing the Gap 2020 \(Cwlth\)](#)

References

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

Carter, E.W, & Briggs, E.E. (2021) *Creating communities of belonging for students with significant cognitive disabilities (Belonging Series)*. Minneapolis, Mn: University of Minnesota, TIES Center
<https://publications.ici.umn.edu/ties/peer-engagement/belonging/introduction>

Department of Education, Skills and Employment. (2019). The Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration. Retrieved 8 November 2023, from <https://www.dese.gov.au/alice-springs-mparntwe-education-declaration/resources/alice-springs-mparntwe-education-declaration>

Disability Standards for Education 2005 <https://www.legislation.gov.au/F2005L00767/asmade/text>

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

United National Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989. Retrieved 8 November 2023 from <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-rights-child>

United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2006. Retrieved 8/11/2023
<https://social.desa.un.org/issues/disability/crpd/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities-crpd>

United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, General Comment No.4 on Article 24 – the right to inclusive education 2016. Retrieved 8 November 2023 from <https://www.ohchr.org/en/documents/general-comments-and-recommendations/general-comment-no-4-article-24-right-inclusive>

Date of first publication: August 2014

Amended: February and August 2019

Last Review: August 2024

Next review: August 2029