



ARCHDIOCESE OF BRISBANE

Catholic Education Council

Policy Statement

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

We are committed to welcoming and supporting students who are experiencing vulnerability, powerlessness and/or poverty because they may be at the margins of society, are out-of-home and/or are disengaged from education.

INTRODUCTION

The Catholic school is *a school for all, with special attention for those who are weakest*.¹ Therefore students who are at the margins of society, out-of-home and/or disengaged from education must be assisted with education, training and Christian formation. Education is recognised as the key pathway to improving equitable economic and social, emotional, psychological outcomes.

RATIONALE

At the heart of the Gospel is *life in community and engagement with others*² and is grounded in the person of Jesus Christ, *I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full* (John 10:10), and provides the way to *bring forth in our lives and actions a primary and fundamental response: to desire, seek and protect the good of others*.³

Throughout the Old and New Testaments, doing justice includes generosity and social concern, especially towards the poor and vulnerable.

*Each individual Christian and every community is called to be an instrument of God for the liberation and promotion of the poor, and for enabling them to be fully a part of society. This demands that we be docile and attentive to the cry of the poor and to come to their aid.*⁴

Research into the nature, extent and needs of out-of-home, marginalised and disengaged students reveals that 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 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.

Catholic and ecumenical school communities, committing themselves to the priorities of Brisbane Catholic Education's *Strategic Plan 2017-2020*⁵, welcome and are intent on improving the engagement, progress and achievement and wellbeing 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 and their parents or caregivers are clearly recognised in:
 - policies and guidelines
 - enrolment policies, procedures, and practices
 - planning and renewal processes
 - pastoral care and wellbeing 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 well-being of all individuals is promoted
- all students are empowered to engage actively with the curriculum and the life of the school
- a deeper understanding of the complex causes of academic, social, emotional, physical 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 with families with supportive community networks beyond the school
- access to flexible system approaches, school structures, procedures and curriculum
- access to essential learning tools and targeted assistance
- intentional and equitable resource allocations inclusive of fee remissions and concessions
- 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.

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

Inclusion: is concerned with all children and young people in school. It is focused on presence, participation and achievement and 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.

Students in Out-of-home care: students not necessarily without a roof over their heads, but who are not living with their parents on a permanent basis; but are living with their grandparents or are in foster care, or under child protection orders, guardianship or custody orders.

Students at the margins of society: 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 or material poverty.

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2. Pope Francis, 2013, *Apostolic Exhortation Evangelii Gaudium of the Holy Father Francis to the Bishops, Clergy, Consecrated Persons and the Lay Faithful on the Proclamation of the Gospel in Today's World*, Rome, s.177.
3. *Evangelii Gaudium*, s.178.
4. *Evangelii Gaudium*, s.187.
5. Brisbane Catholic Education, 2017, *Strategic Plan 2017-2020*, Brisbane.

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