

# ROLE OF PARENTS / GUARDIANS / CAREGIVERS IN CATHOLIC SCHOOLS, COLLEGES AND SERVICES

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**Scope:** This policy applies to all staff employed in Catholic schools, colleges, kindergartens and outside school hours care centres conducted by Catholic Education - Diocese of Rockhampton (referred to as Catholic Education in the document).

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## 1. POLICY STATEMENT

Parents / guardians / caregivers have a personal responsibility for the education of their children or those in their care. They enrich their child's education by their support and involvement in their child's Catholic school, college and service (hereafter referred to as Catholic schools) in the Diocese of Rockhampton. They utilise the structures offered for parental participation and engagement and assist the school in remaining faithful to the mission and principles of Catholic Education.

Parents / guardians / caregivers reinforce within the family the Catholic school's efforts to develop the child spiritually, academically, socially, emotionally and physically.

## 2. DESCRIPTION

Parents / guardians / caregivers have the right to raise children in accordance with the family's own tradition and religious and cultural values.

It is the task of the Catholic Education community to ensure that a distinctive Catholic identity is maintained.

This policy reinforces the important partnership role that parents / guardians / caregivers have in Catholic Education.



### 3. IMPLEMENTATION ISSUES

1. Parents / guardians / caregivers have the opportunity to be involved in the development of Catholic school policies and procedures.
2. Parents / guardians / caregivers have the opportunity to be informed about aspects of the Catholic school curriculum programs, including the Religion Curriculum.
3. Procedures are in place to facilitate formal reporting and feedback to parents regarding their child's progress.
4. Parents / guardians / caregivers have opportunities for assistance and support in the areas of faith, personal growth and effective parenting.
5. Parents / guardians / caregivers are encouraged to be engaged in and contribute to School Boards, Parents & Friends Associations and Catholic school activities.

### 4. REFLECTION MATERIAL

#### RESOURCES

- The Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education (1977) *The Catholic School*
- Pope John Paul II (1982) *Familiaris Consortio – the Role of the Christian Family in the Modern World*
- Congregation for Catholic Education(1998) *The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium* St Pauls Publication
- *Letter of Pope Francis to Families* (2014) The Vatican
- National Catholic Education Commission (NCEC) (2003) *Walking His Way, Telling His Truth, Living His Life: Implications of Ecclesia in Oceania* for Catholic Education Canberra Australia
- The Federation of Parents and Friends Associations of Catholic Schools in Queensland (2015) *Introductory Booklet*
- <http://www.parents.catholic.edu.au/family-school-community-partnership-bureau>



## BACKGROUND

Catholic schools have a responsibility as part of their mission to engage and include parents in Catholic Schools and particularly in the faith development of families as part of their evangelizing mission.

## OUTLINE

Church documents are clear about this role.

### **The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium (1997) states:**

*Parents have a particularly important part to play in the educating community, since it is to them that the primary and natural responsibility for their children's education belongs .... it is necessary to foster initiatives which encourage commitment, but which provide at the same time the right sort of concrete support which the family needs and which involve it in the Catholic school's educational project. The constant aim of the school therefore, should be contact and dialogue with the pupils' families.....in order to clarify with their indispensable collaboration that personalised approach which is needed for an education project to be efficacious'..*

*Congregation for Catholic Education 1998 The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium, Libreria Editrice, Vaticana, Vatican City*

More recently this Vatican document was released in 2013 and makes many references to family:

### **Educating to Intercultural Dialogue in Catholic Schools Living in Harmony for a Civilization of Love (2013)**

This document makes many references to families and their role in education.

*58 The school community is a place for encounter and promoting participation. It dialogues with the family, which is the primary community to which the students that attend school belong. The school must respect the family's culture. It must listen carefully to the needs that it finds and the expectations that are directed towards it. In this way, the school can be considered a true experience of intercultural relationships, lived out rather than just spoken about.*

*60. In schools, understood as educational communities, families have a most important place and role. Catholic schools appreciate their value, and promote their participation in the school, where they can assume various forms of co-responsibility. Even given that some families live in difficult circumstances and there are parents who do not follow the school's recommendations, families are always considered an indispensable reference-point, as bearers of appreciable resources.*

*"Partnership between a Catholic school and the families of the students must continue and be strengthened: not simply to be able to deal with academic problems that may arise, but rather so that the educational goals of the school can be achieved."*<sup>[58]</sup>

*68. Schools are challenged by the multicultural make-up of their classes. They must be able to rethink what is taught; the learning methods; their own internal organization, roles and relationships with families; and the social and cultural context where they are to be found. A curriculum that is open to the intercultural perspective presents the students with a study of civilizations that were previously unknown to them, or were remote from them, but which now are brought to their attention, as well as being brought much "closer" thanks to globalization and modern means of communication, crossing barriers of space and ideological defences. Teaching that aims to help students understand the reality in which they live cannot ignore the aspect of encounter. On the contrary, teaching has the duty to favour dialogue, as well as cultural and spiritual exchanges.*



77. The time spent in formation must be used for reinforcing the idea of Catholic schools as being communities of fraternal relationships and places of research, dedicated to deepening and communicating truth in the various scholarly disciplines. Those who have leadership positions are duty-bound to guarantee that all personnel receive adequate preparation to serve effectively. Moreover, they must serve in coherence with the faith they profess, and be able to interpret society's demands in the actual situation of its current configuration.[69] This also favours the school's collaboration with parents in education,[70] respecting their responsibility as first and natural educators.[71]

One of the goals of the Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians, which was signed by all Australian governments in December 2008, provides a clear expectation that schools will engage with their families and communities:

*"All Australian schools engage children and young people, parents, carers, families, other education and training providers, business and the broader community to support students' progress through schooling, and to provide them with rich learning, personal development and citizenship opportunities."*

#### **What is parent engagement in student learning?**

Parents play a significant role in supporting their children's wellbeing and learning, guiding their children successfully through school processes, and advocating for their children and for the effectiveness of schools.

Parent engagement in schools is defined as parents and school staff- working together to support and improve the learning, development, and wellbeing of children and adolescents.

Parent engagement in schools is a shared responsibility in which schools and other community agencies and organizations are committed to reaching out to engage parents in meaningful ways, and parents are committed to actively supporting their children's and adolescents' learning and development.

This relationship between schools and parents cuts across and reinforces children's wellbeing and learning in the multiple settings—at home, in school, in out-of-school programs, and in the community.

Parents guide the child's upbringing, which includes the interaction processes between parent and child that contribute to the child's emotional and social development.

Families regardless of their race/ethnicity, education background, gender, disability or socioeconomic status, are prepared to engage in partnerships with their child's school and their Diocesan Offices or Religious Institute to improve learning for their children. They can engage in diverse roles such as:

- Supporters who engage with their children's learning and development
- Encouragers of an achievement identity, a positive self-image, and a 'can do' spirit in their children
- Monitors of their children's time, behaviour, boundaries and resources.

Parent engagement also has significant benefits for families and their relationships in the home, the building of social capital in the community; positive effects on school culture; stimulating self-growth among parents, and; enhanced professional rewards for principals and staff (Henderson and Berla: 1995; DEST: 2006 p14). Low SES families particularly benefit from these activities but the advantages are there for all families.



### Benefits of effective family and community engagement in student learning

Research from Australia and overseas has found that students achieve better outcomes from their education when schools, families and the community work together to support student learning.

#### Benefits for schools

**Increased:**

- respect from staff for families' strengths and efforts
- readiness of staff to involve all families in all aspects of the life of the school
- understanding of the students' strengths, needs and goals
- resources to support schools' learning programs
- attendance of families at school activities
- expectation of families and community to be involved in school programs and governance

**Improved:**

- connections with the community
- school image within the community
- family and community satisfaction with the school

#### Benefits for students

**Increased:**

- self esteem
- engagement in learning
- participation in more challenging subjects

**Improved:**

- literacy and numeracy outcomes
- attendance
- completion of homework
- behaviour at home and school
- connection to school and learning
- school completion rates

#### Benefits for families

**Increased:**

- understanding of their child's learning needs and progress
- confidence in the school environment
- investment in their child's education
- feeling of support from school and other parents
- satisfaction with the work of the school

**Improved:**

- self esteem
- capacity to help their child do better at school
- involvement in their own education
- connection to the school
- links with community resources and services

