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Positive Interaction
Positive Interaction

The relationship involving in-school behaviour, social support and members of the school community is clearly substantial. The Education Act (2006) and the National Safe Schools Framework (2011) require that education be provided in ways that provide positive learning experiences, promote a safe and supportive learning environment and recognise each student’s educational needs. Therefore, it is important for school leaders and teachers to create positive learning opportunities to engage their students and to meet learning and teaching outcomes.

The supportive Catholic school environment is one in which

- School practices reflect Gospel values, whereby all members of the school community are valued and treated with dignity and respect
- Spiritual, academic, social, physical and emotional learning outcomes are maximised for all through quality practices in the areas of religious experiences, curriculum, pastoral care and interpersonal relationships, in living out the ethos of the school
- All members of the school community feel safe, supported and respected
- Pastorally-caring practices that include non-coercive and non-discriminatory behaviour are defined, modelled and reinforced by all members of the school community, and
- Suspension and exclusion procedures are considered only when all other approaches have been exhausted, or rejected.

Comprehensive and inclusive approaches to learning and teaching

The provision of a comprehensive and inclusive curriculum is integral to high quality student support. In the light of changing educational priorities, the economic climate and employment prospects for many young people, each school’s curriculum provision should aim to be comprehensive and of the highest quality so that students gain the competence and confidence to participate in the cultural and productive life of society (Refer to the BCE Learning and Teaching Framework). Such curriculum provision is essentially concerned with deeper understandings of

- How individual students learn
- Improvement in the quality and effectiveness of learning and teaching
- Fair and just assessment procedures.

In disorderly situations, children cannot concentrate, teachers cannot teach and classroom time is lost. This compromises the individual’s right to learn and their social and emotional wellbeing. Research clearly illustrates that improving the quality of learning and teaching drives improvements in the standard of student behaviour. Therefore, the environment, social interactions in the classroom, pedagogy and curriculum should all be considered.

Positive relationships

In the school’s daily and routine life, the ways in which people interact with one another significantly affect each person’s sense of self-worth, belonging and wellbeing. The fostering of high-quality interpersonal relationships among teachers, students, parents and support staff is a responsibility shared by everyone. Members of the school community set the tone and priority of student support by their witness and example.
All staff members need to be known as caring, compassionate adults, who both take an interest in the lives of their students and set appropriate boundaries within those relationships.

There are five strategies by which schools can build quality relationships:

- Application of respect, honesty, integrity and compassion
- Development of personal and social skills
- Mediation, conflict resolution and restorative practices
- Awareness of and adherence to appropriate personal and professional boundaries
- Teaching and reflecting on attitudes and skills that build self-awareness, self-management, social awareness and social management (ACARA General Capabilities).

Teachers should be mindful that when relating to students, the use of any kind of coercion or humiliation is inappropriate. Professional relational conduct needs to reflect the BCE and the School’s Student Behaviour Support Plan.

Pastoral Relationships

The development of pastoral relationships is indicative of a safe and supportive Catholic school environment. Such relationships offer proactive synergy in aligning the school’s student behaviour support approaches, student wellbeing, social justice practices and the curriculum. Figure 3 provides an overview of pastoral relationships in our schools.

**Figure 3: Overview of Pastoral Relationships**

Any approach or strategy should not be considered in isolation, but in combination with the fundamental beliefs, values and intents of key support documents, which include the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (2003); *Integrity in the Service of the Church* (2011); Brisbane Catholic Education’s *Strategic Renewal Framework 2012-2016*; *Learning and Teaching Framework* (2012); and Brisbane Catholic Education Guidelines: *Living Life to the Full: Personal and Social Development Education*. These documents provide a set of underpinning principles to assist the development of each school’s student behaviour support and personal and social capabilities program. These guidelines communicate the vision, purpose and principles for student behaviour support and personal and social capabilities education.

Learning opportunities can encompass the following:

- Promoting a positive self-image, personal development and social relationships
- Moral development
- Health and personal safety
- Anti-bullying, harassment and cyber safety education
- Gender and sexuality education
• Digital citizenship information
• Dealing with grief and loss
• Drug and alcohol use prevention
• Mental health and wellbeing
• Restorative Practices/Restoring Relationships
• Truancy prevention and lateness to class prevention
• Vocational awareness.

It is expected that schools will, therefore,

• Promote coherent approaches to child safety, personal and social capabilities and resiliency of students within the whole school
• Develop and implement professional learning strategies to assist staff in meeting the needs of students from culturally-diverse and minority backgrounds
• Strengthen the capacity of staff to monitor and address a range of diverse student needs
• Explore with other diocesan agencies and community service providers models that respond to the needs of students and their families.

Supportive school-family relationships

For the majority of students, the family unit and the school are among the most formative influences in their lives (Bronfenbrenner, 1992). It is therefore essential that relationships of trust, cooperation and partnership are developed between the school and family members and that school personnel always respect and are sensitive to diverse cultural values and family structures. At enrolment, parents and students are asked to make a commitment to supporting the school values and policies.

The Brisbane Catholic Education Council Family School Partnership Policy (2012) states the following:

• “The student’s learning journey is enriched through positive and reciprocal relationships”; and
• “Catholic schools value relationships which sustain and nurture the partnerships between family and school.”

Parents are, therefore, recognised as having the primary role in the education of their children. Furthermore, the home and the school have distinct and overlapping roles in relation to the education of children.

Catholic schools, therefore, have a responsibility to engage and support parents/caregivers in active partnerships and participation in the life of the school community. This relationship is based on mutual respect, and as such, it is expected that parents/caregivers at the point of enrolment are made familiar with, and commit to, the school’s Student Behaviour Support Plan and relevant policies and procedures in place at the school.

Strategies for school-family relationships could include

• School support in times of crisis and instability
• Genuine consultation and involvement in processes and procedures, and
• Informal and formal opportunities for family members to be actively included and involved in the school community
While student support initiatives must respect the privacy of students’ lives, many students and their families actively seek the school’s support in times of crisis and instability. Within the limits of its resources and expertise, a school committed to the total wellbeing of its students would endeavour to provide this support.

**Formation of self-discipline and responsibility**

Brisbane Catholic Education’s value of stewardship attests that “…individuals are seen as moral beings, accountable for their decisions and responsible for their actions, with an ability to seek what is true and to do what is right” (Strategic Renewal Framework, 2012-2016). This model of stewardship promotes responsibility and inner-directedness. Student support may also help students to recognise that their fundamental freedoms and rights are reciprocated by responsibilities.

Whole School Student Behaviour Support Plans, school rules and sanctions are intended to promote the good order and safety of the school community. They should be aids to fostering self-discipline and responsibility, so that students progressively grow in their capacity to exercise moral judgement, democratic values and a concern for the common good.

Suggested strategies for building self-discipline and responsibility include

- Explicit teaching of appropriate behaviours, to support the development of self-management and self-awareness skills
- Presenting positive concepts to promote the good order of the school community
- Fostering of self-discipline and responsibility
- Promoting of capacity to exercise moral judgement and democratic values, and
- Aligning individual behaviour support plans, code of expected student conduct, school rules and sanctions.

**Effective networks of care**

Student behaviour support is the responsibility of every member of the school community. Therefore, a partnership that shares responsibility among staff, students and family members is an integral feature of pastoral care. Many resources are available within the school and wider community for student support in schools. These include student wellbeing personnel, church groups, family support services and respite care and health services. It is important, then, that schools ensure that support services are identified, and that strong links are established with those areas that may be able to support students in need.

These could include, but are not limited to the following

- Guidance Counsellor
- Student Wellbeing personnel
- Campus Minister
- School Pastoral Workers
- Youth Support Coordinators
- Church groups and family support services
- Respite care information
- Interagency- e.g. Child & Youth Mental Health Service, Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services, Queensland Police Service and Queensland Health Services
- Alternative education settings - e.g. Pathways, flexible schooling.
Commitment to justice and service

Social justice is the process of ensuring that educational outcomes for all students are maximised. Social justice involves identifying and eliminating barriers that hinder students’ participation and achievement. Curriculum, interpersonal relationships and school organisational practices need to accommodate the diverse characteristics and experiences of students.

Christ-centred communities challenge the notion of inequity by

- Providing a safe, supportive and respectful environment through pastorally caring practices
- Fostering non-aggressive, non-coercive and non-discriminatory language and behaviour
- Setting realistic expectations for all students.

Within the freedom of options available to schools for their respective student behaviour support philosophies, schools need to ensure that the approaches taken uphold and sustain the *Brisbane Catholic Education Justice Education Policy (2012)*, which recognises the call to justice as being a call to respond to the command of love across all aspects of the school. An essential element of justice in a Catholic school is the application of the principles and processes of restorative justice. These are evident when school communities search for solutions that promote, reconcile and rebuild right relationships with God and with one another (*Cf. Economic Justice for All, 68-71*).

Whole school approaches to student behaviour support

A proactive whole school approach to behaviour and wellbeing is the most effective way to reduce behavioural problems (QSAAV 2011, Gladden 2002, Bucher & Manning 2005, and SWPBS). Effective whole-school approaches have also been positively correlated with increases in academic achievement (*Kids Matter, Mind Matters, SWPBS*), and feelings of safety (*Consortium to Prevent School Violence 2008*).

A safe school is one in which the total school climate allows students, teachers, administrators, staff and visitors to interact in a positive non-threatening manner that reflects the educational mission of the school while fostering positive relationships and personal growth (Boucher 2005, p. 56).

Through the *Strategic Renewal Framework 2012-2016*, Brisbane Catholic Education schools are encouraged to create a whole-school approach to creating safe and supportive learning environments. Strategic Intent 2.5 “Comprehensive whole-school approaches provide pastoral care, protection of students, student behaviour support and foster social and emotional wellbeing” (*Brisbane Catholic Education 2011*).

Elements of a whole school approach can include:

- Teaching behaviour and personal and social learning in a curriculum context, through Learning Areas and/or the General Capabilities of the Australian Curriculum
- A consistent approach that has the support of the school community
- Effective systems for collecting, analysing, and responding to student wellbeing and behaviour data
- Effective teaching of expected behaviour and/or social skills
- Effective learning and teaching practices to engage students in learning
- A focus on positive relationships and mutual respect
- Support for students who are identified as requiring additional assistance
• Support systems for staff, including professional learning opportunities, mentoring and debriefing opportunities\(^7\)
• A system to reinforce expected behaviours\(^8\)
• A physical environment that demonstrates school pride, cleanliness and order and respect for property\(^9\)
• Wrap-around support and Individual Behaviour Support Plans for students with high level needs\(^10\)
• Ongoing conversations with an external critical friend who can facilitate progress e.g. Coach, mentor, Education Officer Student Behaviour Support

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\(^1\) Bucher & Manning 2005, CPSV 2008, NSSF 2011, SWPBS
\(^2\) Kids Matter, SWPBS
\(^3\) CPSV 2008, Kids Matter, NSSF 2011, QSAVA 2011, SWPBS
\(^4\) CPSV 2008, NSSF 2011
\(^5\) Mabie 2003, Willert & Leinhart 2003
\(^7\) Blum 2005, Bucher & Manning 2005, Kids Matter, Mind Matters
\(^8\) CPSV 2008, NSSF 2011, SWPBS
\(^9\) Mabie 2003 p.157
\(^10\) CPSV 2008, NSSF 2011

Organisational structures

The effectiveness of student behaviour support in a school is related to its structural and organisational arrangements. In primary school, the class teacher takes the primary responsibility for the daily care of the students, while in secondary school, this role is shared more broadly. Timetabling and administration can significantly enhance the climate and experience of student support, particularly when such arrangements are flexible and responsive.

Some aspects of student support require the establishment of specific structures and organisational arrangements, including home groups, parent liaison and student counselling and support. If the ideals of student support are to be achieved, pastoral and wellbeing structures must be collaboratively constructed, well co-ordinated, adequately resourced and subject to ongoing evaluation.

Early intervention and targeted student support

Experience and research highlight that positive behaviours are most effectively supported through relationship based whole school and classroom practices (NSSF, 2011). Some individual students and groups of students require additional and ongoing support in the development of pro-social, positive behaviours. The underlying premise of restorative practices and positive behaviour support is that positive behaviours can be taught. With support, students can learn from their mistakes, grow in self-management, take responsibility for their actions, recognise the impact of their actions on others and reconcile and resolve conflict with others.

Some students who are at risk of disengagement from their learning require evidence-based, targeted interventions that are monitored regularly (by a student support group as defined by the school) to assist them to improve their educational performance and wellbeing. These students are best accommodated in supportive and consistent classrooms and school environments that recognise their individual needs and provide appropriate support, together with networks of care, that involve parents/caregivers and external services. Students demonstrating challenging behaviours can therefore be supported through prevention and early intervention practices that create a positive school culture.
Early intervention
Implementing preventative and early intervention strategies to support positive student behaviours involve the following practices:

- Defining and teaching whole school and classroom expectations;
- Establishing consistent whole-school and classroom consequences for inappropriate behaviour;
- Establishing whole-school and classroom processes for early identification of students experiencing academic and/or behavioural difficulty;
- Providing whole-school and classroom processes for ongoing collection and use of data for decision-making;
- Empowering students by creating opportunities for them to take responsibility and to be involved in decision making;
- Assessing the student early and comprehensively to enable appropriate choice of early intervention strategies;
- Utilising evidence-based interventions, which are then monitored and regularly reviewed for those students who face difficulty with learning and/or behaviour; and
- Maintaining a flexible approach and considering the functions or reasons for the student’s behaviour.

Targeted student support
When concerns arise about a student’s behaviour, or when a student is displaying patterns of inappropriate behaviour, a more targeted response may be required to support the student. Early targeted support must recognise that

- Targeted support needs to be based on systemic collection and analysis of data
- Intervention strategies must include the teaching and/or building of appropriate behaviours
- Progress needs to be measured and support reduced gradually where possible
- Intervention practices must occur in the classroom as the first option and should always involve the classroom teacher/s
- Both academic and wellbeing needs to be addressed
- The function of the behaviour needs to be considered
- Partnerships need to involve and support parents/carers
- The formation of a student support team (‘wrap around’) is a critical element in the targeted response
- Further to enabling a student support team within the school, it is necessary to build networks to access support outside of the school for families and students.

Individual behaviour support plan
While whole-school practices promote behavioural expectations to all students and acknowledge pro-social, positive behaviours, some students will require intensive individual support. A process for both addressing individual students’ behavioural needs and assisting their growth in more responsible behaviours is the Individual Behaviour Support Plan.
This is usually a plan formally developed amongst the school, the student and the student’s parents/carers (supported by authoritative advice when required), regarding both future behaviour of the student and the management of such behaviour. The positive and formative purpose of the intervention is recognised and the support to the student to achieve the desired behaviour is explicit. The process description and an example of an Individual Behaviour Support Plan are available in the Toolkit.

Support for schools

Brisbane Catholic Education aims to develop capacity in schools to prevent and plan for responses to inappropriate student behaviour. Through School Service Directorates, training is provided in programs that assist schools to create and maintain a supportive whole-school approach. The Student Behaviour Support Portal contains information about approaches, training opportunities and examples of best practice from schools. Training is available in whole-school approaches, skills for classroom staff, using data effectively, playground supervision, problem-solving for challenging behaviours and strategies to maintain safety if needed.