

# San Clemente High School

## Pastoral Care Policy

Revised October 2013



## **1. Preamble**

San Clemente High School, Mayfield is a Catholic Co-educational, Year 7- 10 Systemic school in the Diocese of Maitland Newcastle.

The rich cultural heritage of its students and its links to Dominican spirituality make San Clemente unique among the junior secondary schools of the diocese. The school operates out of an evolving and dynamic culture of honesty and respect. Respect for the human person in students, parents, clergy, staff and others in the wider community; respect for creation and the environment locally, nationally and globally and respect for the Church and the Gospel Values to which we aspire.

The School's motto is 'Veritas' (Truth) and students are encouraged to follow it by being true to themselves, one another, their families and community.

## **2. Rationale**

San Clemente endeavours to promote a healthy, supportive and secure environment for all members of the community and it has, as its foundation, a profound respect for the dignity and uniqueness of the individual. The School endeavours to provide a strong sense of wellbeing, belonging and security for all individuals.

As a Catholic school, it recognises the life of Jesus Christ as the 'focus, source of strength and inspiration' and example for all we do. It nurtures the whole person towards achieving full potential – physically, socially, emotionally, academically and spiritually.

Research indicates that there are strong links between pastoral care and academic outcomes. The philosophy that underpins the curriculum at San Clemente is guided by the charism of the Dominican Sisters and the Mission Statement of the School.

The School's policy reflects the Diocesan Vision Statement for Catholic schools, especially the following:

- Be an integral part of the evangelising mission of the Church, and reflect Gospel values of justice, truth, peace, forgiveness, love, reconciliation and service of one another.
- Be centred on the person of Jesus and grounded in the Scriptures, in the teachings, traditions of faith and prayer in the Catholic Church and the witness of its past and present saints and scholars.
- Recognise the individuality of each young person, and foster the development of each one's unique potential and spirituality.

### 3. Aims

San Clemente's Pastoral Care Policy aims:

- To ensure that Pastoral care is integral to and permeates the total environment and culture of the school.
- To create within the school community an affirming climate that gives value to the Gospel teachings of love, compassion, tolerance, acceptance, forgiveness, reconciliation and justice.
- To give expression to the relationships of faith, care and support which characterise the school's vision, ethos and practice.
- To be aware of the personal and societal stresses affecting students, teachers, and families in the exercising of pastoral care.
- To develop structures, policies and practices which support the individual student and all members of the school community.
- To acknowledge the increasing prevalence of mental health issues in contemporary society and provide a high level of support for those in need within the School community through relevant pastoral care structures.
- To ensure all staff members at San Clemente are clearly aware of the procedures to follow if a student is identified as being at risk of harm. Refer to Appendix B.

### 4. Implementation

The Pastoral Care practices at San Clemente have been developed in consultation with community stakeholders. The practices are based on the application of Restorative Justice principles and the principles of Procedural Fairness as set out in the Diocesan Statement: Pastoral Care (November 2002).

Consistent with the requirements of the Education Reform (School Discipline) Act 1995, **this policy declares that corporal punishment is inappropriate and totally banned within the school. Therefore also this policy does not sanction the administering of corporal punishment by non-school persons, including parents, to enforce school discipline.**

**\* Please refer to Appendix A which provide details specific to the School's management of Serious Offences. These procedures are in line with Maitland-Newcastle CSO guidelines.**

## 5. Procedural Fairness

Procedural fairness is a basic right of all individuals dealing with authorities. All communities have a legitimate expectation that all school and system personnel will follow these principles in all circumstances, especially when dealing with suspensions and expulsions.

Procedural Fairness is generally recognised as having two essential elements:

1. The right to be heard which includes:
  - The right to know why the action is happening
  - The right to know the way in which the issues will be determined
  - The right to know the allegations in the matter and any other information that will be taken into account
  - The right of the person against whom the allegations have been made to respond to the allegations
  - The right to an appeal.
  
2. The right of a person to an impartial decision that includes:
  - The right to impartiality in the investigation and decision making phases
  - The right to an absence of bias in the decision maker.

As part of ensuring the right to be heard, the Principals should establish if parents/caregivers require an interpreter and if so, make arrangements for one to be available.

Principals should also ensure that students and parents/caregivers have access to policies and procedures under which action is being taken.

While it is generally preferable for the functions of investigating and decision-making be carried out by different people, in the school setting this may not always be possible.

If the Principal is conducting both the investigative and decision making stages, he or she must be reasonable and objective. Ultimately, the Principal must act justly and be seen to act justly. While it is difficult to combine the roles of investigator and adjudicator, it is acceptable to do so given the nature of the Principal's responsibilities. Nevertheless, it is always preferable to have another appropriate person, such as the Assistant Principal, carry out the investigation, if possible.

**Note: Students must never be interviewed/questioned alone.**

The availability of a line of appeal adds to the fairness of the process and offers a check in case there is a perception of a conflict of interest.

## 6. Budget

The Annual School Budget will contain an allocation of funds for the purpose of:

- Staff Professional Development in areas with a focus on Pastoral Care best practice. Particular emphasis will be on Restorative Justice, Restorative Practices and Class Room Management Strategies; Mentoring; Supporting students with Mental Health issues and Supporting Students with Special Needs etc.
- Conducting Retreat and Pastoral Care/Reflection/Community Days
- Purchasing necessary resources
- Conducting special programs and presentations for students and parents (e.g.) Seasons for Growth; Brainstorm Productions; Key Note Speakers, Drug & Alcohol Workshops, etc.
- Supporting community members in need
- Providing outreach support to families in need, especially those in crisis situations

## 7. Evaluation

San Clemente's Pastoral Care Policy shall be clearly documented and reviewed biannually.

Relevant stakeholders of the School, including students, staff, parents and the community, will be consulted in assessing the effectiveness of the policy. Recommendations will be considered and appropriate amendments made if required.

The policy shall be assessed in the light of its effectiveness in promoting and achieving the School's vision, the provisions of the Diocesan Policy Statement: Pastoral Care (November 2002) and for consistency with the Principles of Restorative Justice and Procedural Fairness.

The Policy will be evaluated by community stakeholders:

- at staff, P & F, and SRC meetings
- through surveys
- through informal discussion and general feedback
- by other means deemed appropriate

## Appendix A

### Definition of Serious Offence

The Catholic Schools Office proposes that serious offence should be defined as activity or behaviour that:

- seriously undermines the ethos of the Catholic school; or
- consistently and deliberately fails to comply with any lawful order of a Principal or teacher; or
- is offensive, or dangerous, to the physical and/or emotional health of any staff member or student; or
- consistently and deliberately interferes with the educational opportunities of other students.

#### **NOTE:**

Some serious offences are by their nature criminal offences. Schools are obliged to observe legal requirements in such cases. For further information and guidance, refer to:

- Child Protection:
  - Policy, (1999)
  - Guidelines & Procedures for the Notification of Child Abuse – Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle (1999-2000)
  - Summary of Diocesan Guidelines (1999)
  - Ombudsman Amendment (Child Protection & Community Services) Act 1998 – Guidelines for Implementation (2000).

### Suspensions

Suspension means a temporary withdrawal of a student's right to participation in and attendance at regular school activities. The length of time of suspension will vary depending on the nature of the incident and the purpose of the suspension.

It is a serious disciplinary measure and should only be used when other disciplinary measures have not produced a satisfactory outcome. The decision to suspend a student is to be made by the Principal or their delegated authority.

In normal circumstances suspension is subject to the following guidelines, however, it is recognised that on occasion an immediate suspension\* may have to be imposed.

- That appropriate welfare strategies and discipline options have been applied and documented.
- That appropriate support personnel available within the school and system and externally have been involved.
- That discussion has occurred, prior to suspension, with the student and parent/caregiver regarding specific unacceptable behaviour.
- That records of all discussion and action have been taken.
- That appropriate communication processes are in place, including with the student and the student's parent/guardian.
- A student must not be sent home before the end of the school day until parent/s/guardian/s have been informed, and if necessary, agreement reached about arrangements for the collection of the student from school.

### **Immediate Suspension\***

In some circumstances the Principal may determine that a student should be suspended immediately. This will usually be due to reasons such as:

- the safety of students or staff because of unacceptable behaviour, harassment, violence, or threats of violence
- the presence of knives and/or other weapons or
- the presence of illegal drugs.

Any student who is violent or threatens serious physical violence against another student or teacher or behaves in unacceptable ways, including any form of harassment against other students or teachers, is to be suspended immediately.

Any student who is in possession of a suspected illegal drug, is to be suspended immediately. Principals must contact their school Consultant to inform them of the incident and discuss with them whether the matter is serious enough to be reported to Police.

Any student who is in possession of a knife or threatening to use any item or instrument as a weapon, is to be suspended immediately. Principals must contact their school Consultant to inform them of the incident and discuss with them whether the matter is serious enough to be reported to Police.

### **Short Suspension**

Short Suspension may be served by the student at school during school hours (***internal suspension***) or out of school (***external suspension***). A Principal may impose a short suspension of up to and including four (4) school days.

#### *Short Internal Suspension:*

- The Principal or their delegated authority may suspend a student, in accordance with the school's Pastoral Care Procedures.
- If suspension is served internally, then the student must attend school, but be withdrawn from all normal classes and other usual daily activities.

#### *Short External Suspension*

- The Principal or their delegated authority may suspend a student, in accordance with the school's Pastoral Care Procedures.
- A meeting to resolve the suspension, with the student and parent/caregiver, must be convened by the Principal or their delegated authority at the earliest opportunity. Parents have the right to a support person acceptable to both Principal and parent (eg. Aboriginal Education Worker, Special Education Adviser, Counsellor). Students should not be interviewed alone in relation to suspension issues.
- Where possible, a Principal or delegated authority must have a support person present during all meetings.
- During this meeting, appropriate pastoral care strategies will be discussed to assist the student. These may include the development of a contract indicating expectations regarding the student's behaviour, specific scheduling or timetabling, and monitoring of student behaviour. The consequences of continued unacceptable behaviour needs to be determined and clearly communicated to student and parents.
- If the unacceptable behaviour persists after two short suspensions, a longer suspension must be considered.
- The details of the suspension must be recorded with all relevant documentation retained on file at the school.

- Record keeping and access will be consistent with the Catholic Schools Office *Privacy Policy 2001* and *School Records – Keeping & Maintaining Policy 2002*.

## **Long Suspension**

If short suspensions have not resolved the problem, or the misbehaviour is so serious as to warrant a long suspension, the **Principal may impose a long suspension of up to and including twenty (20) school days**. The school's Consultant must be advised of the suspension including its duration. Given the seriousness of long suspension, particular emphasis must be given to procedural fairness issues.

A formal disciplinary interview must be held with the student prior to making the decision to suspend. Principals must ensure that the student knows what the suspension is for, and that the student has an appropriate person present at the interview. **The main issues of the interview must be recorded**. Where a report from the school Counsellor is available, it may be used for this interview.

A meeting to resolve the suspension, with the student and parent/caregiver, must be convened by the Principal at the earliest opportunity. Parents have the right to a support person acceptable to both Principal and parent (eg. Aboriginal Education Worker, Special Education Adviser, Counsellor).

Where possible, a Principal must have a support person present during all meetings.

During this meeting, appropriate pastoral care strategies will be discussed to assist the student upon their return to school. These may include the development of a contract indicating expectations regarding the student's behaviour, specific scheduling or timetabling, and monitoring of student behaviour.

The further consequences of continued unacceptable behaviour needs to be determined and clearly communicated to the student and the student's parents.

Record keeping and access will be consistent with Catholic Schools Office *Privacy Policy 2001* and *School Records – Keeping & Maintaining Policy 2002*.

## **Deciding on, Notifying and Resolving a Suspension**

### **Decision**

The decision to suspend must be taken by the Principal, or in the Principal's absence, the acting Principal.

The Principal must inform the student of the precise grounds on which the suspension is being considered. The student must be given the opportunity to respond. The student's response must be considered before a decision to suspend is made.

### **Notification**

A student will not be sent out of the school before the end of the school day without notification being made to the parent/caregiver, and if necessary, agreement reached about arrangements for the collection of the student from school.

Notification of suspension must be made to parents/caregivers in writing.

In all cases, it is desirable that the notification includes:

- notice of the suspension
- the date and probable duration of the suspension
- the reasons for the suspension
- a program of work, provided by the school, for the student to continue their studies while suspended
- the importance of parental assistance in resolving the matter.

The Principal must inform relevant/appropriate staff, and the school's Assistant Director.

If consideration is being given to proceeding to expulsion from the school, the notification of suspension should make this intention plain.

### **Resolution**

The Principal must convene a suspension resolution meeting, to facilitate the student's return to school, of personnel involved in the welfare and guidance of the student, including the parents/caregivers, school Counsellor.

If parents/caregivers are unable or unwilling to attend a meeting, the Principal should consider the individual merits of the case and attempt to ensure that the student is back at school on or before the concluding date of the suspension period.

All meetings and interviews are to be recorded with the documentation retained on file at the school.

## **Expulsion**

Expulsion means total exclusion of a student from attendance at the school of enrolment within the diocese of Maitland-Newcastle.

Expulsion is an extreme disciplinary step reserved for cases of gross misconduct, extremely grave breaches of school rules and behaviour that is persistently disruptive and/or dangerous.

In normal circumstances expulsion is subject to the following guidelines, however, it is recognised that, in very limited circumstances of the most serious kind, an immediate expulsion may have to be imposed.

Expulsion is a sanction to be applied as a last resort when other disciplinary measures, including suspension, have not produced a satisfactory outcome. In deciding to expel a student, careful consideration must be given to the welfare of the student and to the overall good and/or safety of the school community.

The Principal should ensure, except as a result of a most serious incident, that all appropriate welfare strategies and discipline options have been implemented and documented, prior to expelling a student from the school because of misbehaviour.

Prior to making a decision to expel, the student must receive at least one formal written warning that such action is being considered.

## **Deciding on and Notifying an Expulsion**

### **Decision**

- The decision to expel must only be made by the Principal.
- The Principal must inform the student and the school's Assistant Director of the precise grounds on which expulsion is being recommended.
- The student must be given the opportunity to respond. The student's response must be considered before a decision to expel is made.
- Prior to a decision being made to expel a student, the Principal must seek advice from relevant and appropriate personnel, eg. Parish Priest of the student, school's Counsellor, school's Consultant.
- If the student is under 15 years of age, the Principal will explore enrolment alternatives with the school's Consultant prior to finalising the expulsion.

## **Notification**

Having reached a decision to expel a student from the school, the following steps must be put in place:

- A student will not be sent out of the school before the end of the school day without notification being made to the parent/caregiver, and if necessary, agreement reached about arrangements for the collection of the student from school.
- Notification of expulsion must be made to parents/caregivers in writing. In all cases, the notification must include:
  - Notice of the expulsion. This formal advice should also state the student's/parents' right to appeal the decision and the appropriate procedures for submitting an appeal.
  - The reasons for the expulsion.
- The Principal must inform relevant/appropriate staff, the school's Consultant and where warranted, the student's Parish Priest.
- The Principal should assist the student to find suitable alternative placement in another Catholic school if appropriate, particularly where the student is under 15 years of age.
- Documentation of all steps involved and record of any interview/correspondence must be completed.
- Having completed the action outlined above, the Principal must forward a copy of all documentation related to the incident and subsequent expulsion to the Director of Schools, Catholic Schools Office.

## **Exclusion**

Exclusion is an extension of expulsion and removes the capacity of a student being enrolled in any Catholic school in the Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle, as a result of the serious nature of the offence committed.

## **Right of Appeal Process**

Students and parents/caregivers who consider that correct procedures have not been followed, or that an unfair decision has been made, may appeal.

- The student's parents have a right to appeal against a notification of expulsion within five (5) working days of the action.
- This appeal is made in writing to the Director of Schools stating the grounds on which the appeal is being made.
- In hearing an appeal, the Director of Schools will be assisted by a Principal and a school Counsellor.
- Following an unsuccessful appeal, the student's parents have the right of appeal to the Bishop, Maitland-Newcastle Diocese, within thirty days. The Bishop or his appointee may appoint an appropriate person to hear appeals.

## Appendix B

### Students at Risk of Harm

If a student threatens self-harm or suicide and a staff member is aware of this, the staff member is to respond as if the student is an ***imminent risk of harm***.

The following procedures must be followed:

1. Report the self-harm or suicide threat/declaration immediately to the principal or delegate in his/her absence.
2. Follow up with an e-mail to the principal with a detailed report of the threat/declaration, including the names of any staff members or students who were present at the time.
3. The student is to be located.
4. Parents/Carers are to be notified by the principal or delegate.
5. Professional referral is to be arranged to the school psychologist.

Any threat or declaration of self-harm or suicide by students is to be considered genuine in nature and it is to be responded to appropriately and swiftly in accordance with the above procedures. If the student claims that the threat or declaration is not genuine, the staff member must not ignore it and ensure he/she follows the procedures at all times.

## SAN CLEMENTE STUDENT NON-ATTENDANCE PROCEDURES

Following are Management protocols of Habitual Non-Attendance at SCM. These procedures are in line with those proposed by the Maitland-Newcastle Diocese.

Please note:

- Absences not necessarily consecutive
- Daily SMS text messages are sent to parents on each day of unexplained absence by SCM Administrative staff

<b>STEP ONE 5 – 10 days unexplained absence</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Pastoral Teacher phone call to parents if required</li> <li>2. School letter home to parents</li> </ol>
<b>*** 1<sup>st</sup> Class Documentation ***</b>	
<b>STEP TWO 11-20 days unexplained absence</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Student Coordinator phone call to parents for each subsequent day of unexplained absence after first 10 days</li> <li>2. Registered letter to parents requesting meeting with Student Coordinator and AP</li> <li>3. Intervention Program discussed at meeting</li> <li>4. (see Appendix D)</li> <li>5. Referral to school Pastoral Care Worker and/or Psychologist</li> </ol>
<b>*** 1<sup>st</sup> Class Documentation ***</b>	
<b>STEP THREE 21-30 days unexplained absence</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Student Coordinator phone call to parents for each subsequent day of unexplained absence after first 10 days</li> <li>2. Registered letter to parents requesting a second meeting with Principal and Assistant Principal</li> <li>3. Appropriate modification of intervention program</li> <li>4. Inform the Assistant Director</li> </ol>
<b>*** 1<sup>st</sup> Class Documentation ***</b>	
<b>STEP FOUR 30+ days unexplained absence (within last 100 days)</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Registered letter to parents from Assistant Director</li> <li>2. Assistant Principal daily phone call to parents for each day of unexplained absence</li> <li>3. Assistant Principal to consult with CSO Child Protection Officer on whether it is appropriate to report to Community Services (CS). If so, Principal makes report to CS and informs Assistant Director</li> </ol>
<b>*** 1<sup>st</sup> Class Documentation ***</b>	
<b>STEP FIVE 30+ days unexplained absence and no improvement from Step 4</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Assistant Directors and Principal make a Compulsory Schooling Undertaking with parents / carers</li> <li>2. School-initiated Compulsory School Attendance Conference</li> </ol>

## STUDENT NON-ATTENDANCE INTERVENTION

Student Identified as being “At Risk” due to non-attendance. Risk Assessment completed & Student considered at Welfare Team Meeting of needing intervention.

**Parent & Student Meeting**  
 Student does not respond to Police Liaison intervention. Meeting with Assistant Principal (Pastoral Care), Year Coordinator & Counsellor. A home visit is arranged if deemed necessary.  
**Intervention Program**  
 Return to school Support Plan discussed, including required goal of lesson attendance whilst at school. (Intervention program outlined below). Program and attendance requirements agreed upon. Support Plan & Contract signed by parent and student.

**Student Participates in Intervention Program**

- 80% attendance requirement over set period of time agreed upon by parents.
- Case Manager or Mentor
- Learning Support Centre
- Career’s Advisor
- Peer Support or ‘buddy’
- School Psychologist or Pastoral Care Worker
- External Support Agencies (Social Worker, CAMHS etc)
- Weekly parent contact
- Weekly Report to AP (Pastoral Care)

**Student does not respond to program and attendance requirements not met**

- AP, YC & Counsellor meet to discuss possible modification of program designed around individual student needs.
- Interview with Principal -80% attendance requirements over agreed upon set period of time.
- Compulsory Schooling Undertaking.
- Keep Them Safe – Community Services Intervention.
- Diocesan intervention – Compulsory School Attendance Conference, Action in the Children’s Court, Prosecution in the Local Court.

**Student does not respond to intervention strategies**

Parent Interview (Principal and Assistant Principal).

Alternate educational options discussed and Student exits SCM.

**Attendance Requirements met**

Program re-evaluated & lesson attendance requirement increased or Student returns to Mainstream.

