

APPLICABLE TO	Catholic schools and system personnel in the DOMN
DOCUMENT OWNER	Assistant Director – Learning and Wellbeing
APPROVAL DATE	2022
SCHOOL ACTIONS	Each school is to develop its own Learning Support procedures consistent with and aligned to the principles and practices outlined in this policy.
LAST REVIEW DATE/S	Learning Support Policy (2017)
NEXT REVIEW DATE	July 2025
RELATED DOCUMENTS	<p>Enrolment Policy (2021)</p> <p>Guidelines for the Enrolment/Transition of Students with Special Needs 2019</p> <p>Personalised Planning Guidelines</p> <p>Programming K–12 Policy 2019</p> <p>Reporting Policy K-12 2017</p> <p>Role Statements: Learning Support Teacher / Coordinator / Assistant / School Psychologist / Education Officer</p> <p>Diocesan Strategic Plan</p> <p>Vision Statement for Catholic Schools, Revised 2013, Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle</p> <p>Learning Framework 2017</p> <p>Assessment Policy 2019</p> <p>Early Learning Policy 2021</p> <p>Gifted Education Policy 2021</p> <p>Wellbeing and Pastoral Care Policy 2022</p> <p>CSO and ASPECT Memorandum of Understanding 2020</p> <p>Position Statement: Students with Gender Dysphoria 2016</p>

## Purpose

The Learning Support Policy 2022 provides guidance to support the inclusion of students with disability in Diocesan schools. The 2022 review of the Learning Support policy reflects the obligations held under the Disability Discrimination Act (1992) and the Disability Standards for Education (2005).

The policy aims to:

- set system-wide direction, for school-based policies, procedures, and practices in response to the Diocese's philosophy of inclusion within schools and implement a learning support model that is focused on building capacity in schools to meet the learning, behavioural, social and emotional needs of students.
- guide individual schools in developing their own procedures, which reflect this policy.
- guide individual schools to establish genuine partnerships with parents/carers in meeting the needs of individual students.
- raise awareness of relevant legislation and related standards in particular the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992*, the *Disability Standards for Education 2005*, the Catholic Schools Office Enrolment Policy, the Diocesan Strategic Plan, and other relevant diocesan policies.

## Policy Statement

Catholic Schools Office, in the Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle, values the diversity of its school communities and is committed to building a more inclusive education system for all students, regardless of disability, ethnicity, socio-economic status, nationality, language, gender, sexual orientation or faith.

All students with disability:

- are entitled to seek enrolment in a Catholic school, on the same basis as their peers
- are welcomed and included in all aspects of school life
- can access and fully participate in learning alongside their peers
- are supported to express their views, set goals and self-advocate. For those students who are unable to self-advocate opportunities are provided for advocacy by a parent/carer
- are supported by reasonable adjustments and personalised support so they are engaged and learning to their fullest capability.

In line with the Disability Standards for Education 2005, all staff must:

- implement reasonable adjustments for students with disability to support them to enrol and participate in all aspects of school life, on the same basis as students without disability
- consult students and their parents or carers on reasonable adjustments
- support students with disability to access the curriculum through reasonable adjustments, and personalised support
- develop and implement strategies to prevent harassment, discrimination and victimisation of students with disability.

In line with effective practice, all staff should:

- work in partnership with students, parents and carers, external service providers, and the community, to achieve the best outcomes for students with disability
- support students, parents, and carers with key transition points
- model inclusive practice to promote social and cultural inclusion of students with disability
- participate in professional learning about supporting the inclusion of students with disability.

## Scope

This policy applies to all schools and staff in Catholic schools in the Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle.

## Guiding Principles

### CATHOLIC SCHOOLS OFFICE

The Catholic Schools Office in the Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle will create a community of inclusive schools, and model of school-based Learning Support by:

- 1.1 recognising its responsibility for meeting the educational needs of all students
- 1.2 striving for the development of schools that are inclusive
- 1.3 providing equity, access and participation for all students attending diocesan schools
- 1.4 supporting a collaborative approach with all stakeholders
- 1.5 valuing the significant contribution made by school staff, particularly classroom teachers

1.6 including Student Voice in the planning of policies, procedures, and initiatives

### SCHOOL COMMUNITIES

Schools will, with support, demonstrate their ability to cater for all students in an inclusive environment by:

- 2.1 creating an environment that celebrates diversity
- 2.2 providing education that allows all students to achieve individual success through personalised access to the curriculum and the provision of appropriate adjustments and intervention
- 2.3 encouraging and supporting staff to seek and participate in relevant professional development opportunities
- 2.4 conducting an annual review of the school's needs and implementing of initiatives relevant to the identified needs within the school.

## Responsibilities

### CATHOLIC SCHOOLS OFFICE

The Catholic Schools Office, through this Learning Support Policy, is responsible for:

- increasing awareness at system and school level of the meaning and implications of inclusion and Learning Support through the publication of relevant policies and guidelines
- providing transparent and equitable distribution of government and diocesan funds to schools, through the provision of a Student Support Package, inclusive of the following allocations: Learning Support Teaching, School Counsellor, Additional Staffing Allocation, Nationally Consistent Collection of Data release
- providing professional learning that builds staff capacity
- providing opportunities for parent information/education sessions
- promoting best practice in inclusive education
- managing resources at system and school level by monitoring learning support funding
- liaising, and developing partnerships, with relevant agencies that support students with disability

### SCHOOLS

Schools, through this Learning Support Policy, are responsible for:

- developing school-based Learning Support procedures
- establishing and properly resourcing a Learning Support Team, which includes a member of the Executive, and ensuring that the team works collaboratively with members of the school community
- following procedures as set out in the Diocesan Enrolment Policy (2021) and the support document Guidelines for the Enrolment and Transition of Students with Additional Needs (2019)
- working within Diocesan guidelines
- ensuring all staff are familiar with and work within the Disability Standards for Education 2005 through completion of the DDA/DSE e-learning modules
- consulting with, and offering ongoing education for, parents / carers
- ensuring appropriate assessment and reporting occurs for students with additional needs
- implementing interventions and adjustments for students with disabilities

- ensuring that collaborative planning processes are implemented for the development of Personalised Plans (PP) as per the Collaborative Planning Guidelines
- ensuring that the resources provided in the Student Support Package are used to meet the specific identified needs of students with disability
- ensuring that all school staff understand and implement this policy and associated school procedures as appropriate

## Glossary

**Commonwealth Funding:** Catholic Schools NSW (CSNSW) has oversight for the distribution of commonwealth funding to all eleven Dioceses in NSW

**Disability:** For the purposes of this policy the term disability refers to those students identified under the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 1992.

**Inclusive Education:** for the purpose of this policy, Inclusive Education means that all students, regardless of disability, ethnicity, socio-economic status, nationality, language, gender, sexual orientation or faith, can access and fully participate in learning, alongside their similar aged peers, supported by reasonable adjustments and teaching strategies tailored to meet their individual needs..

Inclusive education ensures that schools are supportive and engaging places for all school community members. It builds communities that value, celebrate and respond to diversity. It is underpinned by respectful relationships between learners and school community members. It is supported by collaborative relationships with parents and communities through communication, learning partnerships, participation and consultative decision-making.

Inclusive education means that every day in every classroom, every school student is learning and achieving in a safe, supportive, inclusive and disciplined learning environment.

**Inclusion:** Inclusion is a philosophy that influences our beliefs and underpins what we do in our efforts to support students with additional needs. The philosophy of inclusion is that schools have a responsibility to meet the needs of all students, and that all teachers will differentiate and implement adjustments to ensure all students can access and participate in their learning.

For the purpose of this policy the definition of inclusion is from UNESCO. This definition is consistent with conceptualisations in the literature and has broad international agreement:

*“Education is not simply about making schools available for those who are already able to access them. It is about being proactive in identifying the barriers and obstacles learners encounter in attempting to access opportunities for quality education, as well as in removing those barriers and obstacles that lead to exclusion. No child should be defined by a disability. Each child is unique and has the right to be respected as such. When societies embrace inclusive principles and demonstrate this support for equity in practice, children with disabilities are able to enjoy the same rights and choices as other children. Enabling participation in the community and providing educational, cultural and recreational options is of paramount importance for the healthy physical and intellectual development of every child.” (UNESCO, 2013)*

The Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration sets out a “vision for a world class education system that encourages and supports every student to be the very best they can be, no matter where they live or what kind of learning challenges they may face.” (page 3)

The Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle has also embraced the **Salamanca Statement**, adopted by UNESCO in 1994, as its framework for action in the area of developing inclusive school communities.

*“The fundamental principle of the inclusive school is that all children should learn together, wherever possible, regardless of any difficulties or differences they may have. Inclusive schools must recognise*

*and respond to the diverse learning needs of their students, accommodating both the different styles and rates of learning and ensuring quality education to all through appropriate curricula, organisational arrangements, teaching strategies, resource use and partnerships with their communities. There should be a continuum of support and services to match the continuum of Learning Support encountered in every school."*

**Learning Support:** Learning Support encompasses the academic, social, behavioural and emotional needs of students. It targets staffing, structures, processes, and resources that enable students with additional needs to participate meaningfully within the school community.

**Learning Support Team:** The Learning Support Team functions as a collaborative group that links all school resources, processes relevant referrals, and discusses identified issues to target the support of students with academic, social, emotional, or behavioural needs. Membership of the team typically comprises the Learning Support Coordinator/Teacher, member of the School Executive, School Counsellor and other relevant staff as decided upon by the school.

**Learning Support Assistant (LSA):** The Learning Support Assistant is responsible to the school Principal and receives guidance from the Learning Support Teacher /Learning Support Coordinator. Even though the primary work of LSAs is in supporting the students with a range of needs, responsibility for enabling the learning of students with identified special needs lies with the Class Teacher. Under the supervision and direction of the Class Teacher, a Learning Support Assistant is responsible for providing support and assistance in school routines; classroom activities; and the care and management of students with disability.

**Nationally Consistent Collection of Data (NCCD):** The Nationally Consistent Collection of Data on School Students with Disability provides Australian schools, parents, education authorities and the community with information about the number of students with disability in schools, where they are located and the adjustments they receive. The national data collection on students with disability reinforces the existing obligations that schools have towards students under the Commonwealth *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* and the Disability Standards for Education 2005. It counts the number of students who are supported under these obligations based on the professional judgement of teachers and their understanding and knowledge of their students. The national data collection on students with disability acknowledges the work already undertaken in schools to support students with disability. It assists schools to identify and to support students with disability so they can access and participate in education on the same basis as their peers.

**Personalised Plan:** The development of a Personalised Plan (PP) is a process that targets the specific learning needs of an individual student. The term PP is inclusive of all plans developed to support students, for example: Personalised Plan (PP), Behaviour Support Plan (BSP), and Health Care Management Plan (HCMP). As per PP Guidelines the process requires key stakeholders involved with the student to work collaboratively to set goals, identify adjustments and interventions, and implement strategies necessary for the implementation of the plan. The PP contains long term and short-term goals, the adjustments to be made, the interventions to be implemented, the personnel involved in supporting the student, the resources required, and a timeline for implementation and review.

**Student Support Package:** Every school receives a Student Support Package and Guidelines for the use of Student Support Packages. The Student Support Package includes information about the Learning Support teaching staff, Counselling allocation, and the Students with Disabilities (SWD) Allocation. The Learning Support package is reviewed and updated on an annual basis.

## Budget

The Catholic Schools Office will support the implementation of this policy by allocating a proportion of its budget to the provision of services for students with disability. This may include staffing, professional development and/or resources.

Targeted funding from State and Commonwealth governments will be directed to support school-based programs and/or resources for students with additional needs.

The budget allocation is reviewed by a representative group under the authorisation of the Director on an annual basis and future recommendations are made.

## Legislative/Professional Guidelines

*Disability Discrimination Act 1992*, Commonwealth of Australia

Disability Standards for Education, October 2005, Commonwealth of Australia

Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration 2020