

Integrity in Relationships

Principles and Standards for Staff in Catholic Schools



Catholic Education
Diocese of Rockhampton

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Introduction

As people working in the name of the Church, members of staff are not only in a legal relationship but are also in a pastoral relationship with students of the school. They are also in a pastoral relationship with other people where their roles as staff members require them to assist with supervision, education, counselling, medical care, etc.

All members of staff in Catholic schools have a duty of care towards the students in that school. Students, whose trust is seriously betrayed, can thereafter find it difficult to trust those in positions of authority or pastoral care or to believe in or trust God. Hence, relating sensitively to students is central to the ministry of the Catholic school. In the case of teachers and other professional staff there are additional obligations that arise out of their professional roles. It is intended that this statement of Principles and Standards forms part of the Code of Conduct that would supplement other professional statements of principles and standards that apply, for example, the most current Code of Ethics relating to professional conduct issued by the Queensland College of Teachers (QCT).

The document is based on Integrity in Ministry which provides useful guidance to all those who work in the name of the Church.

This document is intended for use by all staff in Catholic schools in the Diocese of Rockhampton and should be read in conjunction with the Code of Conduct, ICT Policy and Codes of Practice. It incorporates principles that staff are expected to uphold in their interactions with each other, students, their families and the wider school community. The behavioural standards given in the document provide examples of types of conduct that flows from the principles and are not to be considered an exhaustive list. Some specific behavioural requirements are also documented. The emphasis in this document is clearly on right relationships. There are other professional and employer responsibilities that are dealt with in other documents.

Principles

1. Staff in Catholic schools witness to the students and respective communities, God's nurturing and all-inclusive love for every human person by reverence and respect.
2. Staff are in a special position of trust and authority in relation to students and have a special responsibility to care for students, to promote their welfare and to protect them from any form of harm.
3. Students and others in Catholic school communities have a right to expect that staff members will exhibit a strong respect for the emotional and physical boundaries which are appropriate and fundamental to their pastoral relationships.

Behavioural Standards that follow from these principles are:

- Treating everyone with fairness, dignity and respect
- Respecting the physical and personal space of others, especially with regard to physical contact
- Respecting the reputation and integrity of others and treating personal information with sensitivity and appropriate confidentiality
- Taking action where it is seen that inappropriate behaviour impinges on the rights or dignity of others
- Applying the principles of justice, fairness and compassion in dealing with behaviour management issues
- Valuing diversity and treating people equitably and with care and compassion while respecting the uniqueness of family backgrounds
- Resolving competing claims of different ethical principles and different interest groups through reflective professional discussion
- Exercising caution in the use of status or power and not using them for self-advantage or self-gratification
- Encouraging the growth of personal freedom and responsibility in particular avoiding the possible exploitation of others
- Being aware of the possible inequalities and risks that might accompany a personal relationship where a pastoral / professional relationship is involved
- Accepting responsibility for the establishment and maintenance of appropriate professional and pastoral boundaries
- Being familiar with the causes and signs of child harm, abuse or neglect, the steps taken for the protection of students and the procedures to follow if harm, abuse or neglect is suspected or observed
- Reflecting on the quality of the pastoral and professional relationships established by the individual and by others

Essential Behaviours

- Report any perceived breaches of professional conduct to the Principal or Diocesan Director of Catholic Education
- Avoid any behaviour that could reasonably be interpreted as harassment, inappropriate or harmful
- Ensure that language or actions (including that utilising technology) cannot be interpreted as inappropriate or sexualising a relationship
- Never ridicule, demean or intimidate a student or threaten their sense of personal safety
- Recognise the role of a staff member is not to be a friend, personal counsellor or parent of the student
- Do not share inappropriate personal information with a student
- Ensure personal appearance and presentation is clean, tidy and

appropriate for your role in the school environment / activity

- Ensure, where reasonably possible, that another adult is present or close by when working one-to-one with a student and avoid situations where students are or may feel isolated
- Never be alone with a student in sleeping, dressing or bathroom areas
- Take particular care to respect personal space and be mindful of physical contact with students
- Never supply or serve alcohol, or any prohibited substance to a student
- Never supply or serve any controlled substance to a student without the expressed permission of a parent or guardian

- Never smoke, consume or be under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs while working with students
- Never administer corporal punishment to students
- Seek advice when there is any sense the relationship is uncomfortable, dysfunctional or unproductive

Notes

These essential behaviours (not to be considered an exhaustive list) must be observed in all relationships between staff and students (even if students are of 18 years of age or older) enrolled in Catholic Schools in the Diocese of Rockhampton. If any of these behaviours are breached, staff may be liable to criminal, employment and professional penalties.



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