

APPLICABLE TO	Catholic schools and system personnel in the DOMN
DOCUMENT OWNER	Head of Teaching and Learning Services
APPROVAL DATE	August 2017
APPROVED BY	CSO Leadership Team
SCHOOL ACTIONS	School Policy – Each school is to develop its own policy consistent with and aligned to the principles and practices outlined in this policy.
LAST REVIEW DATE/S	Learning Support Policy (2007)
NEXT REVIEW DATE	July 2020
RELATED DOCUMENTS	<p>Diocesan Enrolment Policy (2010)            Guidelines for the Enrolment/Transition of Students with Special Needs 2017            Learning Support Handbook            Personalised Planning Guidelines            Programming K–12 Policy 2016            Role Statements: Learning Support Teacher / Coordinator / Assistant / School Psychologist / Education Officer            Diocesan Strategic Plan            Vision Statement for Catholic Schools, Revised 2003, Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle            Learning Framework 2017            Assessment Policy 2017            Early Learning Policy 2017            Gifted Education Policy 2017            Wellbeing and Pastoral Care Policy 2017            CSO and ASPECT Memorandum of Understanding 2017            Position Statement: Students with Gender Dysphoria 2016</p>

## Purpose

The Learning Support Policy 2017 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 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 policies and procedures, which reflect this policy.
- guide individual schools to establish genuine partnerships with parents/carers in meeting the needs of individual students.
- take into account 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

The 2017 review of the Learning Support policy reflects the obligations held under the Disability Discrimination Act (1992) and the Disability Standards for Education (2005).

## Definitions

**Learning Support:** for the purpose of this policy the term Learning Support refers to the support offered to those students who have additional learning needs. Learning Support encompasses the academic, social, behavioural and emotional needs of students. It targets processes and resources that enable students with additional needs to participate meaningfully within the school community

**Inclusive Education:** for the purpose of this policy, inclusive education is defined by the *Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians* (December 2008) which declares that 'all Australian governments and all school sectors must provide all students with access to high-quality schooling that is free from discrimination based on gender, language, sexual orientation, pregnancy, culture, ethnicity, religion, health or disability, socioeconomic background or geographic location' (p.7)

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:** 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."* (UNESCO, 2012)

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."*

## Scope

This policy applies to all schools and teaching 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 aiming to provide 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 classroom teachers
- 1.6 considering all students as an integral part of planning in 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 and provides an education program with an expectation that all students will achieve individual success through the provision of appropriate adjustments and intervention
- 2.2 encouraging and supporting staff to seek and participate in relevant professional development opportunities
- 2.3 conducting an annual review of the school's Learning Support Package and its implementation 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 a Learning Support Policy, Enrolment Policy, Learning Support Handbook, Diocesan Programming and Assessment Policies and other relevant documents
- providing transparent and equitable distribution of government and diocesan funds to schools for students with the provision of a Learning Support Package to each school which includes the provision of staffing and resources as determined by the needs of students with disabilities in the school
- providing Learning Support teaching staff in every school, including a Learning Support Teacher or Learning Support Coordinator in each primary or secondary school, and additional staff, including Learning Support Assistants, as needed
- providing psychological/counselling services (current ratio 1:1000) for every school
- providing a professional development framework that builds staff capacity in schools. This includes:
  - providing teachers without formal Special Education qualifications with the opportunity to undertake On-Line Training Australia courses

- supporting Learning Support Teachers to obtain qualifications in Special Education, for example, a Graduate Certificate in Educational Studies
- providing professional development for school staff to build their capacity across a range of relevant areas in special education
- providing opportunities for parent information/education sessions
- promoting best practice in leadership and management of resources at system and school level by monitoring learning support funding
- establishing processes that:
  - ensure induction procedures acquaint new members of staff and new members of school executive with the philosophy of inclusion and school-based Learning Support
  - ensure staff appointed to Learning Support teaching positions hold post graduate qualifications in Special Education or equivalent
  - ensure all staff are familiar with, and work within, the Disability Standards for Education 2005 through completion of the DDA/DSE e-learning modules (CEC)
  - enable relevant learning support staff to develop Personalised Plans (PP) for students
  - enable the validation of all students with identified special needs and support this process in schools so that the optimum support is provided for students
- planning for future educational directions and practices by analysing current research and trends, monitoring Diocesan practices, collaborating with external agencies, and supporting staff professional development
- liaising with relevant agencies that support students with disability, for example: Autism Spectrum Australia
- providing an outline for schools in relation to Learning Support Packages, including staffing, budget and the overall use of funds for students, and the enrolment of students with additional needs
- providing support to LSTs/Cs in relation to their roles in schools, conducting professional development and networking days, and assisting schools in the development of Personalised Plans (PP)

## SCHOOLS

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

- developing a school-based Learning Support Policy and annually reviewed Learning Support Plan by:
  - consulting with relevant members of their school community
  - developing curriculum initiatives that cater for the diverse needs of learners
  - establishing school-based interventions, processes and strategies for students with additional needs as directed by NESAs and ongoing Diocesan regulations and requirements
- 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 (1999) and the support document Guidelines for the Enrolment and Transition of Students with Additional Needs (2017)

- working within Diocesan guidelines as indicated in the Learning Support Handbook
- ensuring all staff are familiar with and work within the Disability Standards for Education 2005 through completion of the DDA/DSE e-learning modules (CEC) consulting with and offering ongoing education for parents, caregivers and students
- ensuring appropriate assessment and reporting occurs for students with additional needs
- implementing interventions and strategies to enhance learning for students with additional needs
- ensuring that Personalised Plans (PP) are developed, implemented, and reviewed for all students with disabilities (NSW State Criteria/NCCD) and other identified students with additional needs
- ensuring inclusion in state wide and diocesan testing programs occurs where appropriate
- ensuring that the resources provided in the Learning Support Package are used to meet the specific identified needs of students with additional needs
- ensuring that teachers and learning support staff understand and implement this policy and associated school procedures as appropriate to ensure that students have the optimum supports provided to address their needs
- assisting Class Teachers/Coordinators to identify individual student needs and to design, develop, implement, monitor and evaluate curricula plans and programs for identified students. They may facilitate the operation of the school Learning Support Team and may act as the primary point of contact for Catholic Schools Office Education Officers (Student Support) and external service providers. They may have the responsibility to organise, conduct, minute and provide the follow-up for PP meetings and student reviews. They may be responsible for selecting and utilising diagnostic assessment measures to identify levels of student learning (see Role Statement)

**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 Psychologist 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 either 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 special needs.

## Glossary

**Additional Needs:** For the purposes of this policy the term additional needs refers to those students who require support to maximise their educational participation and learning outcomes regardless of cause. This includes students funded under NSW State Criteria (Students with Disability). It may also include students with language difficulties, literacy and/or numeracy difficulties, those who are twice-exceptional or those experiencing emotional, social or behavioural difficulties.

**Commonwealth Funding:** The Catholic Education Commission (CEC) outlines the criteria for eligibility for funding under this program. For more information see the Students with Disabilities (SWD) Handbook.

**Inclusion:** Inclusion is a philosophy that influences our beliefs and underpins what we do in our efforts to support students with additional or alternative needs. The philosophy of inclusion is that schools have a responsibility to meet the needs of all students, that teachers will differentiate and must adjust curriculum, instruction, access and participation strategies to suit the differing needs and abilities of each student in the classroom and school environment. From this has come the development of principles of inclusive education to facilitate the movement from philosophy to practice.

**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 time line for implementation and review.

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

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

**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.

## 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 additional needs. 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

Salamanca Statement 1994