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| APPLICABLE TO | All schools in the Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle |
| DOCUMENT OWNER | Director of Schools |
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| APPROVED BY | CSO Leadership Team |
| SCHOOL ACTIONS | System policy: A school policy is not required. |
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| NEXT REVIEW DATE | August 2024 |
| RELATED DOCUMENTS | Catholic School Enrolment Package Enrolment Procedure 2021 Guidelines for the Enrolment and Transition of Students with Disabilities and Additional Needs School Community Code of Conduct |
| RELATED POLICIES | <i>Inclusive of but not limited to:</i> Anti-bullying Policy for Students and Handbook (2019) Attendance K–12 Policy (2019) Complaints and Grievances Resolution Policy (2019) Enrolment of Students on Visas Policy 2021 Enrolment of Students on Visas Procedure 2021 Family Law Guidelines Learning Support Policy (2017) School Fees Policy (2021) School Uniform Policy (2019) Social Media Acceptable Community Use and Content Policy (2016) Suspension, Expulsion and Exclusion Procedures and Toolkit (2018) Wellbeing and Pastoral Care – Students Policy and Procedure (2017) Workplace Internet, Email and Network Usage Policy (May 2013) |

Purpose

This policy provides guidance for families seeking a Catholic education in the Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle on the enrolment processes. It aims to:

- Set direction for school procedures and practices for enrolling students into Catholic primary and secondary schools within the Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle.
- Establish a common, consistent approach in enrolment practices.
- Assist the system of Catholic schools to:
 - provide schooling, where possible, for children of Catholic families who seek enrolment.
 - cater for the individual needs of each child equitably within the constraints of the available teaching and material resources.
 - encourage parents enrolling their children in Catholic schools to give support to parish and school life, especially in education in faith.

Policy Statement

This policy applies to all school enrolments within the Maitland-Newcastle Diocese.

This Enrolment Policy and accompanying procedures should be read in conjunction with the following documents:

- CSO Enrolment Package
- Enrolment of Students on Visas Policy 2021 and Procedure 2021
- Guidelines for the Enrolment and Transition of Students with Disability and Additional Needs.

School authorities manage local enrolment processes and procedures in a manner consistent with the rationale and guiding principles articulated in these policy and procedure documents.

Definitions

For the purpose of this document:

Catholic families are defined as families in which at least one parent/guardian is a practising Catholic who is involved in the life of their parish.

Catholic school is one which operates with the consent of the diocesan Bishop and is one where formation and education are based on the principles of Catholic doctrine.

Disability has the meaning as described under the New South Wales *Anti-Discrimination Act 1977* and the Commonwealth *Disability Discrimination Act 1992*.

Enrolment Panel means an advisory committee comprising the School Principal/s or their nominees, and the Parish Priest or their nominee. This panel is convened if required, to meet and consider enrolment issues in the Parish and applications for consideration of special circumstances.

Parish is the local parish as defined by its geographical boundaries.

Required information includes:

- Birth certificate or identity documents
- Most recent copy of child's baptismal certificate (if Catholic)
- Evidence of student's residential address
- Immunisation certificate (required for all students enrolling in Kindergarten, primary or secondary school in the Diocese)
- Copies of any family law or other relevant court orders (if applicable)
- Signed acceptance of Conditions of Enrolment and the School Community Code of Conduct
- All specialist assessments or reports relevant to special needs of student enrolling
- Proof of identity and residency status if the student is a non-Australian citizen:
 - Permanent resident
 - Passport or travel documentation
 - Visa letter or a VEVO printout from the Department of Immigration & Border Protection (a permanent visa states 'permitted to remain in Australia indefinitely' on the visa)
 - Previous visas (if applicable)
 - Temporary visa holder
 - Passport or travel documentation

- Visa letter or a VEVO printout from the Department of Immigration & Border Protection
- Authority to enrol issued by the Temporary Visa Holders Program
- Evidence of the visa the student has applied for (if the student holds a bridging visa)

'Those with the greatest need' May include those students who are socially, financially, emotionally and/or spiritually disadvantaged and/or at the margins of society.

Guiding Principles

1. Catholic schools, inspired by the person and teachings of Jesus Christ, strive to be centres of excellence and authentically Catholic.
2. Catholic school communities work to create strong partnerships with the parish/parishes they serve.
3. Catholic schools will ensure that the enrolment process is a welcoming manifestation of Gospel values.
4. In choosing a Catholic school, parents and guardians agree to respect and support the Catholic identity of the school, its role in the parish and to acknowledge the importance of Religious Education for their children. Students are required to participate in Religious Education classes, liturgies and retreats that will support the Catholic culture and life of the school.
5. Catholic schools have a particular responsibility to provide a Catholic education to children of Catholic families and to support parents in honouring the commitments that they made on behalf of their children at Baptism.
6. The Catholic school, whilst established to educate children from Catholic families, will accept enrolments from families who are prepared to support Catholic ideals, principles and practices.
7. Catholic schools recognise and accept the responsibility to welcome and support those who are poor, marginalised and those with the greatest need.
8. Catholic schools are committed to the inclusion of children with special needs through the processes set out in the Guidelines for Enrolment and Transition of Students with Disabilities and Additional Needs.
9. No child will be denied a Catholic education because of a family's genuine inability to pay school fees.
10. Our diocese aims to provide the choice of Catholic schooling to all those seeking a Catholic education for their children. Enrolment of a child into a Catholic school, however, cannot be guaranteed. A fair clear and transparent process to determine the priority of enrolment will be implemented.

1. Enrolment Categories

1.1 KINDERGARTEN ENROLMENTS

- There is one intake into Kindergarten each year and this is at the beginning of the year.
- To be eligible for Kindergarten enrolment in diocesan schools, pupils must celebrate their fifth birthday on or before 31 May of the year in which their parents seek enrolment for them. This varies from NSW government advice which states that the minimum starting age for a child to be enrolled in a NSW school is four years and six months, i.e. a child must turn five by 31 July in the year of starting school.
- By law, all children must be enrolled in school by their sixth birthday.

1.2 EARLY AGE IN KINDERGARTEN

- The enrolment of students under the minimum starting age is not recommended. In those situations where, a parent seeks enrolment of a child under the minimum starting age; and the

principal agrees to enrolling the child in the school, the approval of the designated Assistant Director is required, before enrolment under the minimum starting age can occur.

- An application for Early Age Entry to School will need to be submitted to the Assistant Director by the principal for approval to be sought. Supporting documentation from appropriate health or educational professionals detailing substantive reasons for early school entry must be attached to the application, as well as a letter from the parent(s) requesting an exemption from the policy. It is the responsibility of the parent/caregiver to provide all appropriate documentation to the principal for submission to the Director for consideration.
- Approval for early age enrolment will only be granted in exceptional circumstances.

1.3 EARLY AGE IN PRIMARY OR SECONDARY

- The Principal has the discretion to process an early age enrolment (Primary or accelerated Secondary school entry) only if special circumstances exist.
- Parents must be informed by the principal or delegate that the school will assess the child's readiness and learning after consultation with the Senior Education Officer (Student Support) at the time of the enrolment application.
- For individual cases (primary and secondary school entry) where it is believed that the readiness of a child would warrant his or her enrolment at an earlier age than usual, the Principal must consult with the Senior Education Officer (Student Support) to arrange for an individual assessment of the child's readiness and learning needs.
- Before agreeing to the early enrolment of the child the Principal must seek written approval from their Assistant Director.

1.4 SECONDARY ENROLMENTS

- Primary Principals must pass on to Secondary Principals all relevant academic and financial information of the student. Indebtedness in prior schools needs to be considered to ensure satisfactory arrangements are in place for the management of outstanding fees. Privacy and confidentiality guidelines are to be followed.
- Ordinarily, children of Catholic families who have completed their primary education in Catholic schools will have priority of entry into Catholic secondary schools.
- Students having enrolled in a Catholic primary school should generally have the opportunity to extend their post primary education to a secondary school within the diocese and where the family has supported the Catholic ethos of the school. Whilst it is highly desirable that all children who have received a Catholic education in the primary grades have access to a Catholic secondary school, this continuity of enrolment cannot be guaranteed in all circumstances.
- Special arrangements may be introduced from time to time to assist the maximum provision of enrolments in the diocese.

1.5 STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

- Provided the school has adequate facilities and resources, no child will be denied Catholic schooling because of a disability. A Student Support Officer from the Catholic Schools Office will be contacted for advice during consideration of an enrolment application for students with special needs.
- Principals must refer to the *Disability Discrimination Act* and the *Guidelines for the Enrolment and Transition of Students with Disabilities and/or Additional Needs* – see the flowchart in the Enrolment Procedure.
- A Student Support Officer Student Services must be contacted for advice during consideration of an enrolment application for a student with disabilities.

1.6 OVERSEAS STUDENTS ON VISAS

- Given the current complex regulations which govern the conditions under which students holding visas may seek enrolment into Australian schools, Principals are to refer all applications to their Assistant Director. Enrolments must not be approved until this is done. Please refer to the Enrolment of Students on Visas Policy (2018) and Procedure (2019).
- In making such referrals Principals must sight the applicant's passport and visa and forward a copy identifying the visa status of the student concerned. The time period specified on a visa is critical and if the student is successfully enrolled the expiry date needs to be tagged on the school administrative system. When this period expires the student may no longer be eligible for education and/or State and Commonwealth recurrent funding. If a student's visa expires the Principal should immediately contact their Assistant Director.
- Students seeking enrolment who hold a student visa (subclass 500) will not be offered education in a Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle school. These students are not eligible for State or Commonwealth recurrent funding and are liable for both local fees and for the recovery of government per capita grant subsidy as well as ESL tuition that may be required. Students holding this visa subclass come to Australia expressly to access education and not due to family relocation.
- Principals may not guarantee enrolment of a student holding a visa until advice has been provided by the Catholic Schools Office.
- For ESL costs and/or support to families contact 'Teaching and Learning Services' at the Catholic Schools Office.

1.7 STUDENTS WITH A HISTORY OF VIOLENCE

- The Catholic Schools Office has a responsibility to assess and manage any risk of harm to its staff and students. Section 5A of the NSW *Education Act* places responsibility on Principals to ascertain whether there is anything in a student's history or circumstances which might pose a risk to the student, other students or staff.
- If there are reasonable grounds to suspect that the student has a history of behaviour that gives rise to a risk at school, Principals should ensure the Request for student background information and documents form is forwarded to any previous school. 'Reasonable grounds' may include, among other things, responses provided on the application form or by the parents or student in discussion with the school, or information provided by reputable sources such as previous Principals, school counsellors, staff with previous experience of the student, or staff of other government agencies with first-hand knowledge of the student. From the information provided the Principal needs to ascertain if a Risk Management Assessment is needed. This is **not** intended for all students or as an avenue to prevent a student from enrolling.

1.8 CONDITIONAL ENROLMENT

- The Principal may, in discussion with the student, parents, parish priest, staff and CSO personnel, enrol a student on a conditional basis in light of the student's particular situation and/or needs at the time of or during the student's enrolment. Conditional enrolment may be considered where all 'Required Documentation' has not been submitted.

2. Cancellation of Enrolment

- Failure to support the implementation of the Catholic philosophy, values and aims of the school and/or failure to abide by the School Community Code of Conduct may lead to cancellation of enrolment following a procedurally fair process.
- A student enrolment from another Catholic primary school can only be accepted if fees have been fully paid at the previous school. This is also the case for students attending Catholic secondary colleges in the Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle.

- Once a student has been enrolled, any consideration of enrolment cancellation is subject to the Suspension, Expulsion and Exclusion Support Document.

3. Exemption from Enrolment at School

- By law, all children must be enrolled in school by their sixth birthday. In the case of parents of children of compulsory school age seeking authority not to enrol, this must be considered as an application for exemption from school enrolment. Certificates of Exemption from the compulsory education requirements of Section 25 of the [Education Act 1990](#) may be granted by the Director of Schools when it has been clearly demonstrated by the applicant that an exemption is in the student's best interests in the short and long term and that alternatives to exemption have been considered. For further information refer to the Guidelines for Exemption from Attendance at NSW Catholic Systemic Schools.
- Diocesan Directors may grant such exemptions due to:
 - age, where a child turns six years on or after 1 October or later in a school year and is engaged in:
 - full time preschool education at an accredited preschool for the remainder of that school year
 - participation in full or part-time accredited preschool programs for students with disabilities leading to enrolment and full-time attendance at a government or registered non-government school not later than six months after the child's sixth birthday
 - the health or disability of a child necessitating the continuation of an individual program supported by medical specialists not longer than six months after the child's sixth birthday.

4. Appeals and Disputes

- Appeals against the decision shall be made firstly to the Principal, then to the appropriate Assistant Director at the Catholic Schools Office.
- Procedures and processes in the Complaints and Grievances Resolution Policy will be followed.

Budget

The Catholic Schools Office will fund diocesan advertisements for the opening of school enrolments each year.

Schools need to allocate funds for their own documentation and individual publicity costs.

Legislative/Professional Guidelines

The following legislation is relevant:

Child Protection (Working with Children) Act 2012
Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998
Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth)
Disability Inclusion Act 2014
Disability Standards for Education 2005 (Cth)
Education Act 1990 (NSW)
Education Act 2013 (Cth)
Racial Discrimination Act 1975 (Cth)
Sex Discrimination Act 1984 (Cth)
Teacher Accreditation Act 2004 (NSW)