

ST BRIGID'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL OFFICER

Parish of St Michael's Berwick

A STATEMENT OF BELIEFS & VALUES

Purpose

The statement of beliefs and values articulates the philosophy on which St Brigid's Catholic Primary School is founded. In particular the statement sets out to describe the sort of curriculum that is to be delivered and the sort of learning environment that is being created to enable this curriculum.

Statement of Beliefs & Values

The Catholic school exists as part of the evangelising mission of the Church and it is challenged to foster a distinctive culture, educational vision and practice. The life of the school community is important as a means of evangelization because it provides a unique context which favours the integral development and Christian formation of students. The school evangelises through its particular culture, through the witness of life of members of the community, and through its curriculum. Jesus Christ, His message and His mission need to permeate in an explicit way all facets of school life.

The membership of the school community is diverse. Some are conscious and active members of their Catholic community some belong actively to other Christian traditions or religious faiths. Some are not explicitly Christian, but nevertheless have sought enrolment for their children in the school. Many students come from households in which the adults belong to different churches, or one partner is intentionally Christian and the other is not. A large number of children and parents are baptised Catholics who may not participate consciously in a community of faith or deliberately attend to the religious dimension of their lives. The school is challenged to find appropriate ways to engage all members of its community in conversation about Christian identity.

The Catholic school does not function in isolation; it is part of the wider Church community. In this context, the tasks of evangelisation, catechesis and religious education are shared by home, school and parish, with each having its own distinct contribution to make in a sense of genuine partnership. The school is therefore established as an educational and ecclesial community, and the task of integrating these dimensions is the ongoing work of the school community. Vital interaction with and connections to St Michael's Parish, Berwick and the municipal community is seen to be strengthening the school's identity and enriching its ecclesial and education life.

The way the Christian vision is incorporated into teaching and learning is of particular significance for the mission of the school. From this perspective, teachers love and respect learners and they are deeply committed to their own learning. In practical terms this love and commitment is expressed in the desire shared among staff to provide a high quality education for all students through best practice pedagogy, sound curriculum development and effective assessment and reporting.

Religious Education lies at the heart of the curriculum of the school, synthesising, enriching and complementing the learning experiences of students. It articulates intentionally, the connectedness of the human person with the whole of reality, human and divine, thus it can awaken all disciplines of learning to their deep potential. Every curriculum area or subject that is taught in the school has a religious dimension, a capacity to assist students to examine the world of human culture and the world of religion, providing knowledge and skills, and fostering attitudes and values that are life-giving and that assist young people to search for meaning and truth.

The students do not comprise an homogeneous group. They exhibit a rich diversity in terms of their most pressing individual needs, their cultural, social and economic backgrounds, their personal qualities, their stage of development and the experiences they have encountered in life. They are also from a range of faith backgrounds, are at different stages of faith development and have various levels of faith commitment.

Christians are called to respect the dignity and uniqueness of each person. The Gospel imperative directs attention to the just claims of those in need of support, including those who are disadvantaged by societal prejudice and a deficiency in financial or other resources, along with those with language, learning or

developmental difficulties. Hence, the school seeks to develop an overall curriculum that will cater for individual differences and build the self-esteem of all its students in an environment free from discrimination, coercion and suspicion.

The school will respond to the differing learning needs of children through the provision of a curriculum that offers differentiated learning programs. The *Victorian Essential Learning Standards* provide a framework for the curriculum that intentionally addresses the various dimensions of the human person. This framework seeks to develop in learners the knowledge, skills and behaviour appropriate to three interconnecting strands of learning: physical, personal and social learning; discipline-based learning; and inter-disciplinary learning.

The students and teachers have both indoor and outdoor learning areas available to them which encourage and facilitate creative and flexible learning, including ample scope for play and other creative activities. Electronic communications, information and learning technologies are integral to the school's learning environment. Both students and staff have ready access to these technologies in all learning areas, indoor and outdoor.

The indoor learning space will be the primary learning environment for students. These areas are flexible and can be configured to create small and larger areas, to be more open, or indeed more closed. Much of the furniture is moveable and it too can be used to demarcate different activity areas. Consequently students and teachers have multiple areas within the learning space to locate themselves for learning activities. Each student will nonetheless have a 'home base' and a storage area for his or her belongings. The outdoor space is a suitable learning space itself. Consequently, the outdoors environment offers a number of learning spaces and the connection between the indoor and outdoor learning spaces is relatively seamless.

Many students require access to specialist educational services that are mostly provided by visiting specialists, both Diocesan staff and private providers. Adequate and suitable space is available for students to access these specialist services.

The school is designed to be a safe environment where the children and adults can feel secure. Priority has been given to making the experience of arriving at the school, of being in the school and of leaving the school, positive, encouraging and life-giving, and free of fear and frustration. Student amenities, taking the form of individual toilets with wash basins are located within each learning areas to provide security. External toilets are also individual and are located in secure supervised locations. Access to drinking water for students is available in each learning area.

The approach to traffic management provides for the safe arrival and departure of students. Bus traffic is separated from the car drop-off and pick-up area. And staff and visitor car parking has been configured to minimise conflict with drop-off and pick-up traffic.

The school community builds on the experience children have of community in their own families. The formation children receive in their family setting is vital to their development. The school aims to support parents in this task through a variety of means. A dedicated space for parents to gather for social and educational purposes and a work-space for a home-school liaison person is provided. The school is available to the community as a resource and there are many ways through which this aspiration will be achieved. The Multi-Purpose space will be a key resource for meeting this aspiration.

The operation of the school as a community and its interaction with its immediate natural environment will be instructive with regard to how an individual exercises a personal and communal responsibility for creation, its life-systems, the environment and resources. The built facility is responsive to the natural features of the site and the possible integration of these into school curriculum. The energy efficiency of the buildings has been enhanced through the use of external eaves and sun shading, the use of natural sources of energy, the extensive use of natural light, water storage, reuse and saving measures, acoustic control, landscaping and sun shaded external areas