



St Columba's School Bayswater

Grow in Faith Seek Wisdom Live in Peace

Catholic School Retreats Policy

VISION STATEMENT

St Columba's Primary School aims to foster the total development of each individual, within a loving community, that is totally committed to supporting the Catholic faith, principles and ideals within the framework of the Mercy Values.

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1. Rationale

'Catholic schools need to provide the best apprenticeship that they can in the Christian life.' (Bishops' Mandate, 59). School retreats are an integral part of the life-long faith formation of young people. They promote systematic, intentional catechesis as part of the comprehensive evangelisation of students.

Catholic school retreats are relational at heart. To be effective, retreat programs acknowledge the individual's unique reality and bring the power of the Gospel into contemporary culture in a way that engages and empowers young people.

The Catholic school retreat aims to put students in 'communion and intimacy with Jesus Christ' (GDC, 80). Through the retreat experience students come to know Christian love and are exposed to a Gospel centred way of life. Students hear the Gospel and are empowered to connect the Gospel message to their lives and to find ways of continuing the Church's mission. They participate in the life of the Christian community through liturgy and through activities which emphasise growth in Christian faith.

2. Definitions

Retreat refers to time away from the normal school program where participants have the opportunity to reflect on their relationship with God. The emphasis is on students' awareness of the presence of God in their lives. Retreats may vary in style and duration. They include experiences of prayer, discussions, reflective silence and quiet time alone. The celebration of the Sacraments of Reconciliation and Eucharist is strongly encouraged.

3. Scope

This policy applies to all Catholic schools in Western Australia.

4. Principles

4.1 Retreats aim to provide experiences for students to know, contemplate and celebrate Jesus.

4.2 Retreats are an integral part of Catholic school life. They need to be inclusive, purposeful, meaningful and take into account the culture, developmental needs and experiences of students.

4.3 Retreats complement the catechesis experiences offered by the school.

4.4 Retreat planning needs to take into consideration the charism, ethos and mission of the school.

4.5 Retreats need to be planned in a way that engages students in rich experiences of Catholic symbol and ritual.

4.6 Retreat staff will be committed to the faith formation of young people.

5. Procedures

5.1 Each school shall have its own retreat planning policy which is compatible with this policy statement.

5.2 A school's retreat planning policy shall follow the CECWA School Excursions policy.

5.3 Parents and students shall be informed about the nature and purpose of the retreat and the level of student involvement required.

5.4 A school retreat program shall consider the religious and cultural backgrounds and the developmental needs of the students.

5.5 A school retreat program shall include appropriate prayer and liturgical experiences.

5.6 A school retreat program shall include creative and engaging activities and approaches with young people which connect to systematic catechesis.

5.7 Staff involved in a school retreat shall be familiar with the retreat program and its expectations prior to and during the retreat.

5.8 The roles of retreat staff shall be clearly defined.

5.9 The retreat program shall include appropriate evaluation procedures, including feedback from students.

5.10 External groups that provide retreat experiences for Catholic schools are to be provided with copies of this policy and are required to follow it.

6. References

Bishops of Western Australia, Mandate of the Catholic Education Commission Rationale 'Catholic schools need to provide the best apprenticeship that they can in the Christian life.' (Bishops' Mandate, 59). School retreats are an integral part of the life-long faith formation of young people. They promote systematic, intentional catechesis as part of the comprehensive evangelisation of students. Catholic school retreats are relational at heart. To be effective, retreat programs acknowledge the individual's unique reality and bring the power of the Gospel into contemporary culture in a way that engages and empowers young people. The Catholic school retreat aims to put students in 'communion and intimacy with Jesus Christ' (GDC, 80). Through the retreat experience students come to know Christian love and are exposed to a Gospel centred way of life. Students hear the Gospel and are empowered to connect the Gospel message to their lives and to find ways of continuing the Church's mission. They participate in the life of the Christian community through liturgy and through activities which emphasise growth in Christian faith.

