

	Topic:	Catholic School Retreats
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	Policy Area:	Catholic Identity
	Standing Committee:	Religious Education and Curriculum Committee
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## **RATIONALE**

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).<sup>1</sup> 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.

## **DEFINITIONS**

The term 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.

## **PRINCIPLES**

1. Retreats aim to provide experiences for students and/or staff to know, contemplate and celebrate Jesus.
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.
3. Retreats complement the catechesis experiences offered by the school.

4. Retreat planning needs to take into consideration the charism, ethos and mission of the school.
5. The school shall consider the financial burden of sending students and/or staff on retreats.
6. Retreats are seen to be an extension of St Mary's School. The same code of conduct expected during school hours is expected of all students, staff and supervisors for the duration of the retreat. Pastoral care systems shall be in place to support the needs of all students.
7. Retreats need to be planned in a way that engages students in rich experiences of Catholic symbol and ritual.
8. Retreat staff will be committed to the faith formation of young people.
9. Behaviour Management, Bullying and Harassment, Child Protection, Medication and other school policies and processes shall continue to be applicable.

## **PROCEDURES**

1. All retreats must be approved by the Principal. This is to be done at least five weeks before the retreat is scheduled to take place. Parents should be notified of the cost as early as possible so as to give them the opportunity to budget in order to pay off the total cost.
2. Parents and students shall be informed about the nature and purpose of the retreat and the level of student involvement required. A permission slip must be signed and completed by the child's parent/guardian before they are allowed to attend the retreat. A letter outlining the method of transport and the activities to be undertaken at the retreat should be attached.
3. A school retreat program shall consider the religious and cultural backgrounds and the developmental needs of the students.
4. A school retreat program shall include appropriate prayer and liturgical experiences.
5. The appropriate student to adult ratio should be maintained at all times when on a school retreat.
6. A school retreat program shall include creative and engaging activities, and approaches with young people which connect to systematic catechesis.
7. Staff involved in a school retreat shall be familiar with the retreat program and its expectations prior to and during the retreat.
8. The roles of retreat staff shall be clearly defined.
9. The retreat program shall include appropriate evaluation procedures, including feedback from students.
10. Where a student does not attend a school retreat the school shall provide an alternative education program.

11. When during the course of a retreat

- a student suffered an injury or
- experienced ill health or
- where an incident related to student discipline, safety, or any serious consequence occurred

a report shall be submitted to the Principal by the teacher in charge of the retreat.