



**CATHOLIC EDUCATION**  
DIOCESE OF WOLLONGONG



# Lighting the Way Together

**PARENT - SCHOOL  
PARTNERSHIP FRAMEWORK**



**SERVING SYSTEMIC CATHOLIC SCHOOLS  
IN THE ILLAWARRA, MACARTHUR, SHOALHAVEN AND SOUTHERN HIGHLANDS**

**“We must take note of the changes that have affected both the family and the school, and renew the commitment to constructive collaboration - for the benefit of children and young people”**

Pope Francis  
2018



## CONTEXT

The shared mission of all in Catholic Education Diocese of Wollongong (CEDoW) is to ‘create vibrant Catholic communities where every student finds meaning and purpose in their life through experiencing continual growth in faith and improvement in learning’ (*Lighting the Way, Vision and Strategic Direction, 2019-2022*).

Informed by our Catholic tradition, we believe this is best achieved when there is a genuine partnership between home, school and parish. In particular, the role of parents, as ‘the first and primary educators’ (*Vatican II*) of their child, is recognised and valued. We believe that the ‘partnership between a Catholic school and the families of students must continue and be strengthened’ (*The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School, 1988*).

This belief is also reflected in our strategic direction and school improvement agenda as a core element in creating effective schools. Drawing on the broader educational agenda and contemporary research, we aspire to create learning communities which build and maintain collaborative partnerships with parents and the broader community which will enhance student learning and wellbeing outcomes.

This framework has been developed to support the creation and maintenance of the partnership between parents and school so that together we can create:


- identifiably Catholic communities, inspired by the person and teaching of Jesus Christ, where all strive to act with hope, integrity, justice and compassion;
- effective schools which improve outcomes for students.

## PARTNERSHIP STATEMENT

In choosing a Catholic systemic school in the Diocese of Wollongong, parents enter into a partnership with the school.

In this partnership, the responsibility for their child's learning, wellbeing and faith development is shared between them, as the first and primary educators of their child, and the school community.

This partnership is a collaborative relationship between home and school, working with the parish, toward our shared mission.



**“Parents and families are recognised as integral members of the school community and partners in their child’s education”**

Australian Council for Educational Research  
National School Improvement Tool, 2016

Catholic Education Diocese of Wollongong uses the term *parent* inclusive of all adults who have the responsibility for the care and wellbeing of a child or young person. We recognise that the role of parent is fulfilled by a range of individuals within the variety of family structures that exist.



## Authentic Catholicity

## Respectful Relationships

### Partnership Principles

Parents and school commit to

#### Expectations

We live this in our communities by

### Co-creating a Catholic community

Valuing and respecting:

- the Catholic identity of the school as a community centred on Jesus Christ;
- its connection to the parish community and the wider community of the Diocese of Wollongong;
- the expression of its tradition through prayer, liturgy and Catholic beliefs and teachings.

Being welcoming, inclusive and compassionate.

Respecting the dignity of all.

Acknowledging that the wellbeing of the individual is balanced with the common good.

Living the Catholic faith through the principles of Catholic Social Teaching.

Supporting social justice initiatives that give witness to the Catholic faith in action.

**“By this all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another”**

John 13:35

### Building positive relationships of respect, trust and resilience

Treating every person with courtesy, respect and positive regard.

Respecting parents as the first and primary educators of their child who bring a specific knowledge and perspective to the partnership.

Respecting school leaders, teachers and school staff for their knowledge, professional skills and expertise in education.

Assuming each member of the partnership is committed to the learning and wellbeing of each student.

Supporting relationships with regular and meaningful communication.

Adopting a positive and hope-filled attitude and seeking to proactively resolve any issues.

Approaching any disagreement with an openness to respect the opinions of others, and a willingness to address concerns in an appropriate manner.

Accepting that not all responses to concerns can be resolved with mutual agreement.

**“Do to others as you would have them do to you”**

Luke 6:31





## Supportive Environment

## Connected Community

## Active Engagement

### Maintaining a safe, supportive and respectful school environment

Upholding school rules, directives, policies and processes in place to ensure the wellbeing of all, and the effective learning and wellbeing of students.

Respecting that the school has external accountabilities in regard to staff and student wellbeing and safety.

Following school-based communication protocols that:

- uphold the privacy of all and are aligned with current legislation;
- are considerate of the school as a workplace and the commitments of families.

Ensuring processes for raising and resolving concerns are clearly communicated and adhered to.

Adhering to the standards of the [CEDoW Social Media Statement](#).

Ensuring our language and behaviour are not aggressive, abusive, intimidating or threatening.

**“Therefore encourage one another and build each other up”**

Thessalonians 5:11

### Creating a connected and welcoming community

Being interested and aware about school events and activities.

Engaging in the life of the school and parish by participating in community events.

Allowing all voices to be heard:

- individually, by participating in formal and informal opportunities to receive information and provide feedback;
- collectively, by participating in or supporting forums which allow collaboration and consultation between parents and the school.

Modelling positive messaging about the school, parish and members of the school community.

**“For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them”**

Matthew 18:20

### Supporting engagement in learning and wellbeing

Participating in initiatives which share information between school and home to complement learning across both settings.

Communicating openly via formal and informal opportunities to share all relevant information about each child's learning and wellbeing.

Modelling a positive attitude to learning, education, school and co-curricula activities.

Actively supporting consistent student attendance at school.

Facilitating a positive learning environment at school and at home.

**“Make me to know your ways, O Lord. Lead me in your truth and teach me”**

Psalms 25:4

**“A school becomes a place of dialogue and peaceful encounter promoting attitudes of respect, listening, friendship and a spirit of partnership”**

Pope Francis  
2013



## UPHOLDING THE PARTNERSHIP PRINCIPLES

When schools and parents work together it is expected that both parties will uphold the Partnership Principles and Expectations.

These principles and expectations apply to all interactions between home and school, including face to face, phone, written and online communication.

When using social media all parties will be expected to adhere to these principles and expectations and the standards of the [CEDoW Social Media Statement](#).

## RAISING A CONCERN

In circumstances where the school or CEDoW believes that a parent disregards or consistently does not uphold the Partnership Principles and Expectations, the matter will be addressed using the [Parent-School Partnership Principles Resolution Procedure](#).

There may be times when parents feel that the school has not upheld the Partnership Principles and Expectations, or have a concern or complaint about a school decision or process.

This is generally best addressed by communicating with the school in the first instance, and following any school-based procedures for raising concerns.

If a parent feels resolution has not been reached at school level, they should refer to the [CEDoW Complaints Process](#).

Given our shared commitment to safeguarding children, the positive involvement of parents working together with schools in raising a concern assists to ensure we remain child focussed.

## Message from the Bishop of Wollongong

The Church has always reminded us that parents are the first educators of their children in the ways of faith. From my own experience I know of the unique nurturing environment that only a family can provide in guiding a child as they grow in faith and understanding. Parents, however, cannot do this alone, and in our country we have the benefit of wonderful Catholic schools and parish communities who partner with parents in the challenging but privileged work of educating and forming children. This is essential vocational work for all of us, and I fully endorse this framework and the aspirations it proclaims, for as Pope Francis says, “we must renew the commitment to constructive collaboration for the benefits of children and young people.” It takes a village to raise a child, and our children will always benefit when adults work together in respectful partnership.



Most Rev Brian Mascord DD  
Bishop of Wollongong

## Message from the Director of Schools

As a parent and a teacher, I can not underestimate the profound impact of a collaborative partnership as described in this framework. What greater purpose is there than the education and wellbeing of our children and young people? The values and expectations articulated in this document lie at the heart of respectful relationships and for working together towards this common purpose. This partnership asks parents and staff in our Catholic schools to recognise each other's rights, responsibilities and shared commitment to creating vibrant Catholic school communities where every child is cared for and valued. Indeed, this is our shared calling, and the very reason for the existence of our Catholic schools.



Peter Turner  
Director of Schools

**“We aspire to create a community that welcomes and is deeply connected to parents and carers, parishioners and the local community”**

Lighting the way. Vision and Strategic Direction for Catholic Education in the systemic schools of the Diocese of Wollongong 2019-2022

## LIGHTING THE WAY TOGETHER

### PARENT - SCHOOL PARTNERSHIP FRAMEWORK

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## Acknowledgements

The Lighting the Way Together Parent - School Partnership Framework has been developed by a team comprised of representatives of all key stakeholders.

We acknowledge their contribution and that of the principals, school leadership teams, teachers, staff, parents and clergy who participated in the consultation process.



For all updates and further reading  
please visit

[www.dow.catholic.edu.au/partnershipframework](http://www.dow.catholic.edu.au/partnershipframework)