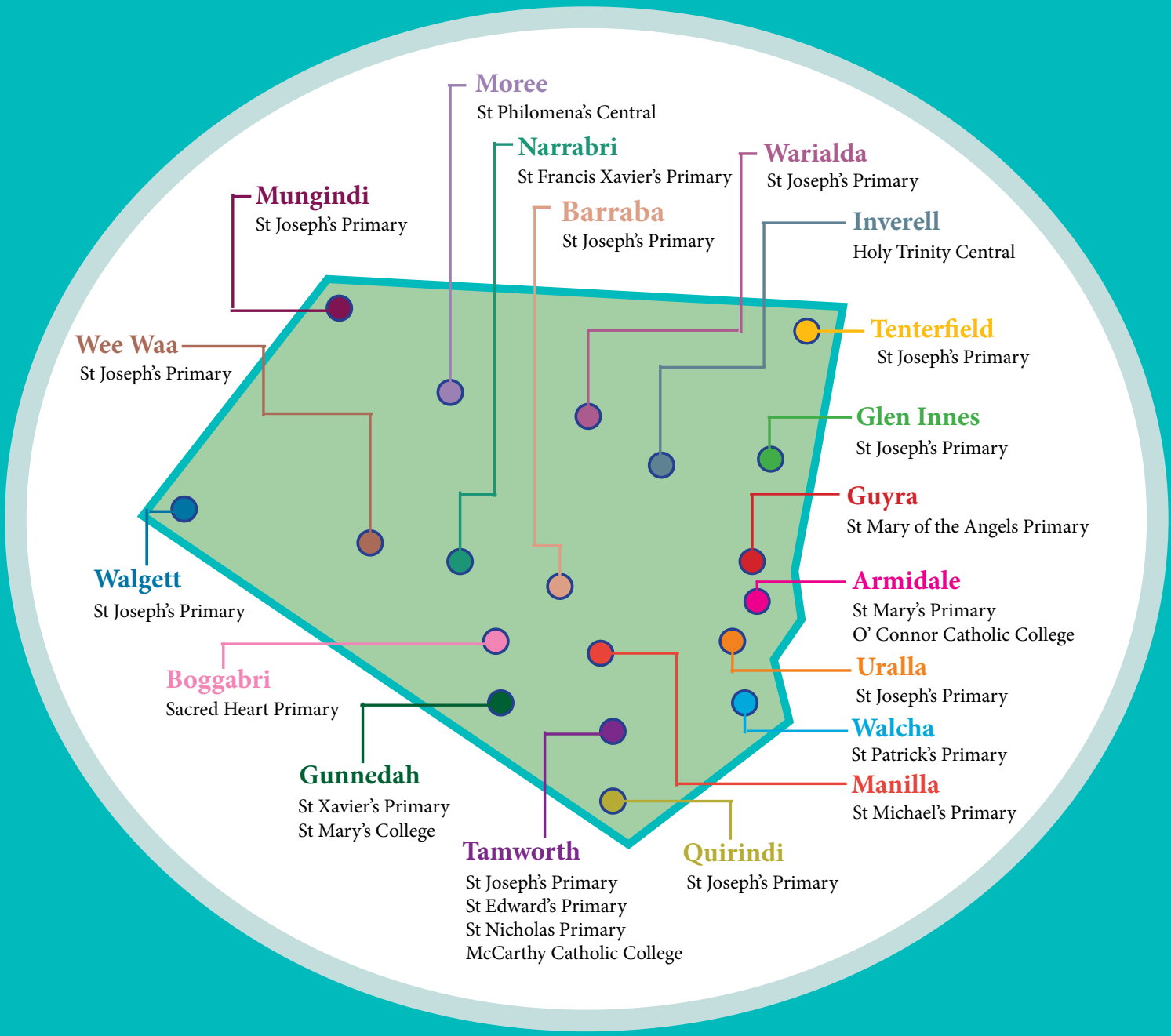
Living Well, Learning Well

Policy & Procedures

Catholic Schools Office
Diocese of Armidale



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Systems and schools that allow negative and stereotypical labelling of students place another barrier to full participation and inclusion before them.

Living Well, Learning Well

A Student Support Framework for the Diocese of Armidale

Student-centred pedagogy

Connection and participation

A universal and unconditional positive regard for children and young people, and a high regard for the collective capacity of a school staff team to increase learning, wellbeing and life-opportunity outcomes for children and young people.

Working in teams and developing teams

Inclusion: maximising access and opportunity for all students

Case management and intervention

Multi-tiered systems of support for academic, positive behaviour and wellbeing domains

Where Catholic pastoral care is centred on a universal *ethos of care* and the work of a team of skilled, helpful adults is founded on evidence-based, high-impact approaches to improving conditions of learning, teaching, wellbeing and faith development for children and young people.

Student Support Policy

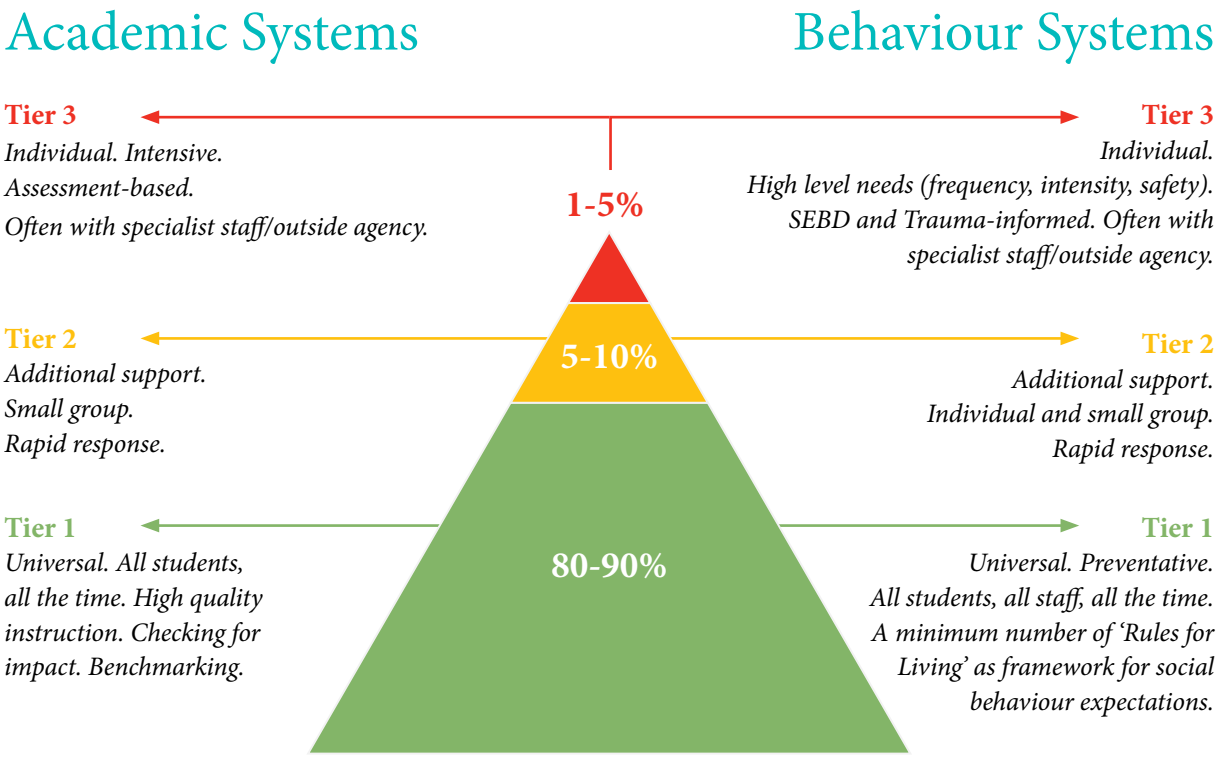
Student Support Policy 1: Contemporary Understanding

Staff in Armidale Catholic Schools are familiar with, support and align practice with some contemporary prerequisites for working with children and young people, including:

- an unconditional positive regard for children and young people
- a willingness and capacity to be a skilled, helpful adult in a team of skilled helpful adults who work together using high-impact strategies to improve the conditions for faith development, learning, teaching and wellbeing for children and young people
- an understanding of schools as safe, productive and inclusive communities, and children and young people as deserving of respect and esteem.

Student Support Policy 2: Multi-Tiered System of Support

Staff in Armidale Catholic Schools are familiar with, support and align practice with a multi-tiered system of support (MTSS) to maximise student access to universal, targeted and specialist support for the academic, wellbeing and behaviour domains.



This approach ensures that when adults are concerned about student progress in any domain, the same questions are asked:

- Are student needs being met?
- How do we know?
- What do we do next?

When planning next steps, skilled staff make decisions that are evidence-based and non-judgemental.

Student Support Policy 3: Intervention Team

Each Catholic school of the Armidale Diocese has an Intervention Team that works to improve support for students in the learning, behaviour and wellbeing domains. This team meets regularly to plan and initiate interventions to improve tiered support for groups and individuals.

Intervention teams work to build understanding and expertise to respond to the unique learning, wellbeing and behaviour support needs of students in each school. This includes building data literacy to gather evidence of whole-school, small group and individual student support needs.

Student Support Policy 4: Informed Language of Behaviour Support

Student behaviour in Armidale Diocese Catholic schools is described in a way that is consistent with an ecological or ecosystemic approach that recognises behaviour as complex, shaped by environmental, family, community and relational influences, and is best framed in non-judgemental, observational language.

Rules for Living, founded on the statements *I am safe, I am valued, respected and cared for*, *and I am a learner* are central to a positive language of behaviour in Armidale Diocese schools. Productive, positive behaviours are described in terms of how they keep self and others safe, how they display consideration for others, and how they support the learning and wellbeing of self and others.

Behaviours that diminish safety, care or learning are described as *unsafe and/or unproductive.* A punitive approach often links a predetermined consequence to a named behaviour. An ecological, interventionist approach allows the question: *How do we support this student to replace this unsafe/unproductive behaviour?*

Staff in Armidale Diocese schools will support a language of behaviour that encourages the triggering of a structured decision-making process when educators are concerned about a student's welfare, including observed student behaviour.

Behaviours typically described as *bullying* behaviours are named unsafe behaviours, and are subject to a risk assessment. Terms such as allegation, perpetrator and victim are avoided in favour of a clear language outlining unsafe actions, associated risk and risk-reduction strategies.

Staff in schools of the Armidale Diocese are aware that mental health difficulties can trigger internalised behaviours and conditions, and/or externalised behaviours and conditions, and that punitive responses to some externalised behaviours can be a barrier to appropriate mental health support.

Student Support Policy 5: Immediate Response Behaviours

Immediate response behaviours are those that pose a significant safety, child protection or wellbeing risk and/or are illegal. Externalised behaviours that elicit this response include physical violence and credible threats of physical violence, behaviours that put others at risk of

psychological harm, intentional significant property damage, sexual misconduct, use or supply of illegal or restricted drugs, non-suicidal self-injury, suicide attempts or threats, and other similarly serious behaviours. Internalised behaviours or conditions that elicit this response include diagnosed mental health conditions, evidence of mental health difficulties, and other similarly serious behaviours or conditions.

Students who exhibit an immediate response behaviour are typically removed from the setting while a risk assessment is conducted. This is the start of a decision-making protocol and process that determines next steps. Students may be asked to stay away from the school setting, or have clearly restricted, risk-reducing, in-school movement while this process happens.

Immediate Response Behaviours Protocol

Schools have an identified staff team responsible for leading student support, appropriate structures and protocols to ensure that notification of concerning student behaviour is efficient, and that risk-reducing decisions are made quickly.

Immediate Intervention

1. What happened or is happening?
2. What was/is the impact of the behaviour?
3. Does this situation trigger the declaration of a critical incident?
4. What actions do we take to mitigate impact and/or reduce immediate risk?
5. Who do we inform?

Next

1. Who determines next steps?
2. Do we need outside expertise and/or CSO support?
3. Plan and communicate next steps—typically with a CSO Safety Plan, Behaviour Plan or Wellbeing Plan.

Student Support Policy 6: Functions and Types of Suspension

Suspension—the temporary removal of a student's right to attend classes and school—has historically had a disciplinary and/or risk-reducing function in schools. The shortcomings of a punitive suspension function are now more widely understood and Armidale Diocese schools shouldl avoid associating particular behaviours with a mandatory punitive suspension.

Mandatory suspension is reserved for several high-risk and/or illegal activities, that are high-risk and/or illegal irrespective of setting, and which elicit a formal response in wider society.

Formal Immediate Suspension

Temporary withdrawal of a student's right to attend school is required for dangerous and/or illegal behaviours. Principals should suspend a student immediately for:

- possession of an illegal drug
- violent behaviour
- possession of a prohibited weapon.

Principals may consider a formal immediate suspension for other serious behaviours that pose an immediate or ongoing physical or emotional safety risk to a member or members of the school community.

Where possible, a formal immediate suspension is communicated to parents and carers verbally, and followed with a notification letter. The School Performance Leader and parish priest are notified with a copy of the notification letter.

Suspension length is determined by processes necessary to ensure a safe return to school. Suspensions longer than 5 days are considered when there are significant barriers to a safe return to school and/or when a serious high-risk behaviour is repeated. In these cases, outside agencies are typically involved.

Prior to resuming school, a re-entry meeting is held to formulate and document risk-reducing strategies, adjustments and supports.

Behaviour Withdrawal

Armidale Diocese schools support students to recognise and replace unproductive behaviours. A behaviour withdrawal may be used when students persist with an unproductive behaviour that poses a safety, wellbeing or learning interruption risk to members of the school community, or when student behaviour initiates a behaviour plan process.

The focus is the centrality of school social behaviour expectations:

- I am safe (and here is how I am kept safe and keep others safe).
- I am valued, respected and cared for (and here is how I am valued, respected and cared for, and how I value, respect and care for others).
- I am a learner (and here is how I support my learning, the learning of others and the work of my teacher and other adults).

A behaviour withdrawal can be included in a behaviour plan as an inevitable consequence for a serious unproductive behaviour or persistent, repeated unproductive behaviour. A one-day behaviour withdrawal can also be used when behaviour is at the point of initiating an individual behaviour plan. It provides some space before a meeting to formulate the plan.

A behaviour withdrawal can be used when the principal or delegate is confident that:

1. The student has been properly supported to replace an unproductive behaviour, including the explicit teaching of a replacement behaviour.
2. The behaviour is not a direct consequence of unmet learning or wellbeing needs.
3. The behaviour does not indicate serious social, emotional or behavioural difficulties (SEBD).
4. With support, the student has the capacity to replace the behaviour with a safe and/or productive behaviour.

Behaviour withdrawal emphasises that schools have a serious responsibility to keep people safe, valued and able to access learning and wellbeing support. An emphasis on risk assessment, removing barriers to productive behaviour and increasing support for replacement of unproductive behaviour is more likely to elicit a positive, supportive response from parents and carers than a legalistic, punitive approach. A step back from the formality of suspension is more likely to allow parents/carers and school staff to work in partnership to assist students replace or modify behaviours before escalation necessitates a more structured and documented response.

Behaviour withdrawals are recorded and documented at the school level. CSO personnel and the parish priest are informed if the principal determines that parents/carer are not supportive of the withdrawal and/or are questioning procedural fairness, or if the withdrawal is longer than three days.

Student Support Policy 7: Termination of Enrolment

The enrolment of post-compulsory (17 years and older) students may be terminated if the student does not satisfy NESA requirements for course completion and is unable to progress, for example from Year 11 to a Year 12 course of study.

Expulsion is termination of enrolment following behaviour that is dangerous, harmful and/or illegal to a degree that in the principal's view, supported by the Director of Schools any potential, future productive student-school relationship is irrevocably broken. This CSO-mediated action is not required for typical behaviours exhibited by children and young people, and is reserved for extreme behaviour, with the anticipation that it is rarely, if ever, used in schools.