

early years in order to provide a foundation for further learning

- ~ use collaborative practices when compiling profiles and reporting on each child's learning and development in the foundation learning areas and the key learning areas.

#### **Environment**

- ~ locate, where possible, early years classes in close proximity to each other for multiple and flexible use of resources and facilities
- ~ provide and maintain safe, flexible and developmentally appropriate indoor and outdoor learning environments.

#### **DEFINITION OF TERMS**

##### **Active Learning**

Active learning refers to the use of play and active participation as a relevant, powerful and effective medium for learning and understanding across the early years. These experiences and opportunities provide children with meaningful contexts which

enable them to explore, use and develop spiritual, emotional, social, cognitive and physical skills and abilities, before these are applied in other situations.

##### **Early Childhood**

Early Childhood encompasses the development and learning of children within the age range, birth to eight years.

##### **Early Years**

The early years encompasses development and learning from preschool to Year Three. Preschool is the non-compulsory year prior to entry into Year One.

##### **Learner-Centred Curriculum**

Learner-centred curriculum in the early years is created and implemented to respond to the unique developmental needs, interests, learning styles and preferences of individual children. This requires educators to scaffold learning and to gradually reduce the level of support, thus facilitating and enabling children to demonstrate successful learning outcomes.

#### **References**

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*Congregation for Catholic Education. (1998). The Catholic school on the threshold of the third millennium. N.S.W: St Pauls.*

*MacNaughton, G. (1999). Review of early childhood: Curriculum issues in research and in action. Discussion paper for consultation. Tasmania: Department of Education.*

*Queensland School Curriculum Council. (1998). Preschool curriculum guidelines. Brisbane: Queensland School Curriculum Council.*



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**ARCHDIOCESE OF BRISBANE  
CATHOLIC EDUCATION COUNCIL**

# POLICY

# STATEMENT-

## Early Years

FOR BRISBANE CATHOLIC  
EDUCATION SCHOOLS

NOVEMBER 2001



This policy statement reflects the Archdiocese of Brisbane's commitment to the principles and practice of the early years of schooling within Brisbane Catholic Education. It has been developed through a consultative process involving classroom teachers, school principals, senior administration staff, parents and other stakeholders.

*The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium* document highlights the need for 'courageous renewal on the part of the Catholic School'. It states:

*"...the scope of educational functions has broadened, becoming more complex, more specialised. The sciences of education, which concentrated in the past on the study of the child and teacher-training, have been widened to include the various stages of life, and the different spheres and situations beyond the school. New requirements have given force to the demand for new contents, new capabilities and new educational models besides those followed traditionally..."n.2*

Brisbane Catholic Education accepts its obligations as an integral part of the Archdiocese of Brisbane. The early years of schooling provide an important foundation for the future well being of every child. The Church recognizes the need to foster the spiritual development of each child through the role models of loving parents, caregivers, teachers and pastors.

The responsibility for implementing this policy will reside with Catholic school authorities and their qualified and dedicated staff who share in the overall mission of the Archdiocese.

I have no doubt that, through them, as they uphold the philosophy embedded in this policy, our commitment to the Catholic education of students, and especially to those in the early years of schooling, will be strengthened and renewed.

Sincerely in Christ,

Most Rev John Bathersby DD  
ARCHBISHOP OF BRISBANE

November 2001

## EARLY YEARS POLICY

### POLICY

Catholic primary schools will strive to ensure continuity of learning for every child across the early years. This will be achieved through the provision of a holistic, outcomes based curriculum which is responsive to each child's diverse and unique spiritual, social, emotional, learning and developmental needs and circumstances. Continuity of learning will be enhanced through the establishment and maintenance of effective, collaborative partnerships within the learning community together with the incorporation of relevant and meaningful active learning experiences.

### INTRODUCTION

The holistic development of the child in the early years provides a strong foundation for success throughout life. This policy statement is embedded in the Vision Statement for Catholic Education which proclaims the gospel message and promotes learning that is lifelong and life-giving. In particular, the teachings of Jesus Christ provide the motivation for the challenges contained in this document:

*"Let the children come to me..." (Lk 18:16)  
"That they may have life, life to the full..."  
(Jn 10:10).*

The term *Early Years* refers to the years of schooling from preschool to Year three. While there is a preference for schools to offer preschool education, it is acknowledged that it is not always possible to provide such a facility. In these circumstances, schools are encouraged to forge strong, cooperative links with local preschool providers in the interests of building on the child's experiences when they enter a Catholic school in Year One.

### RATIONALE

The *Early Years Policy* is a response to contemporary directions within the field of early childhood. The Early Years of schooling is a crucial time for children to celebrate their uniqueness, to develop social, emotional and behavioural well-being, and to experience success in learning. A young child's sense of self and sense of God will be based on love, kindness, patience, dependability and trust, all of which are ideally model by parents/carers, teachers and members of the faith community.

Parents are recognized as the primary educators of their children. Research in the area of early childhood emphasises the establishment and development of effective partnerships to support children and families during this critical period of schooling, especially in the smooth transition from home or an early childhood setting. Within the early years the diverse needs of each child will be provided for and the

impact of socio-cultural influences on a child's learning and disposition acknowledged. In this context, it is important to build foundations for lifelong learning, to prioritise successful literacy and numeracy teaching and to use purposeful play and active participation as a valuable medium for learning.

Educators are asked to evaluate current structures, practices, curriculum and pedagogy, particularly in the early years. Each school is expected to provide flexible, supportive and encouraging learning environments, and to design an inclusive curriculum which demonstrates continuity and connectedness as children make various transitions throughout their schooling.

### CONSEQUENCES

*Each Catholic school, in partnership with Brisbane Catholic Education, will:*

#### **Community**

- ~ establish effective partnerships with children, parents/carers and other professionals to enhance learning
- ~ explore flexibility of learning groups
- ~ promote continuity of learning for each child throughout the Early Years.

#### **Staff**

- ~ familiarise all staff with the *Early Years Policy* and negotiate relevant professional development
- ~ provide appropriate staffing ratios to enable all children in the early years to experience success
- ~ work collaboratively with parents and community to support the child's ongoing faith development.

#### **Curriculum**

- ~ create a learner-centred curriculum that provides opportunities for children to engage in purposeful and real life learning experiences
- ~ prioritise support for the development of each child's literacy and numeracy learning across the