



# ENROLMENT

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## WHO CAN ATTEND A CATHOLIC SCHOOL?

Children whose fifth birthday occurs on or before 31 July are eligible for enrolment for Kindergarten that year. By law, all children must be enrolled in school by their sixth birthday.

A new Enrolment Policy for Parramatta Diocesan Catholic schools has been introduced which offers Catholic families greater choice by allowing them to apply for enrolment at a Catholic school anywhere in the Diocese.

Where places are limited, priority will be given in order to:

Catholic children who live in the local parish

Catholic children from other parishes

Children of families who actively participate in the life of the school and local parish community (e.g. siblings)

Orthodox children

Children from other Christian faiths

Children of non-Christian faith

Catholic schools have a strong religious dimension and people of other faiths who wish to enrol in Catholic schools should be willing to participate in the religious activities of the school. Check with the principal of the school you are applying to.

### **Siblings**

Siblings of children already enrolled in the school are considered by the same criteria above. However, within each of these categories, a sibling of a child already enrolled will have preference over an applicant who does not have a sibling enrolled in the school.

### **What if my child already attends a Catholic primary school in the Diocese?**

A child who has completed primary education in a Catholic parish-based primary school will usually be offered continuity of enrolment in a Catholic secondary school. If no places exist at the chosen school, Catholic Education's Director System Performance will assist families to enrol in another Catholic secondary school in the Diocese.

## WHEN SHOULD I ENROL MY CHILD?

While schools accept enrolment applications at any time during the year, the main enrolment period is from February to May for the following school year.

Contact the Catholic school you are interested in for more information about their enrolment period and to enquire about availability.

## HOW DO I ENROL MY CHILD?

Each primary and secondary Catholic school looks after its own enrolment process so it is best to contact the school you are interested in to find out what you need to do. Most schools conduct an enrolment interview.

### Is there a special time of the year for enrolment?

While Catholic schools accept enrolment applications at any time during the year (pending vacancies), the main enrolment period is from February to May for the following school year. Contact the school to check when enrolment applications are due.

### What documentation do I need to enrol my child?

Generally, Primary schools require the following:

- birth certificate (or naturalisation certificate)
- record of baptism
- immunisation record
- passport (if not an Australian citizen)
- medical records (especially if there has been any special medical condition such as epilepsy, or physical or mental disabilities)
- the name and phone number of a contact person in the case of an emergency
- a copy of any court order which affects parental responsibilities for the child
- a reference perhaps from the parish priest or another significant person

Secondary schools may also require:

- school reports with academic records for (at least) the previous two years

The school will let you know what documentation is needed at the time of application.

## DO CATHOLIC SCHOOLS ENROL CHILDREN WITH ADDITIONAL NEEDS?

Catholic schools welcome students with diverse needs and aim to provide appropriate educational opportunities and support for students with additional needs. Once the school has evaluated whether the prospective student meets the general enrolment criteria, the additional needs of the student and the school's capacity to meet them must also be evaluated.

Additional needs are varied and sometimes complex to identify and evaluate. Close partnership with parents is important to support the prospective student in finding what may be their best interests. In some instances a school placement may not be available at the desired school or be in the best interests of the student. The Principal and Catholic Education's Director System Performance may seek a way forward by working with the family, if the family would like assistance.

Parents of children with additional needs are advised to approach the desired school more than a year in advance.

## DO CATHOLIC SCHOOLS ENROL STUDENTS FROM OVERSEAS WHO ARE NOT AUSTRALIAN RESIDENTS?

Enrolments of non-Australian citizens may only be considered after implementation of the existing general enrolment policy for the Diocese and at no time will they be enrolled in preference to an eligible local student. Systemic schools in the Diocese of Parramatta are able to offer enrolment to non-Australian citizens providing that they have a valid visa (the exception being subclass 571) and:

capacity exists within the school in the relevant year group

preference in enrolment is given to overseas students from practising Catholic families over those from other families

non-Catholic students enrolled and their guardians make a commitment to accept the ethos of the Catholic school and to participation by the student in all aspects of the Religious education of the school

the student's language and academic needs can be catered for within the existing school structure, or if the school can otherwise provide the additional requirements.

Please note that Catholic Education Diocese of Parramatta does not actively recruit students from overseas and does not enter into any arrangements with education agents or pay any commissions in relation to any prospective student enrolment.

Families will need to contact the school in which they are seeking enrolment directly to arrange an enrolment interview. They will also need to provide original documentation to the school to validate the student's current visa status so that the fees payable can be determined.

Please note that the fees payable will depend on the visa subclass that has been issued by the Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC) and students holding a Bridging Visa are now required to pay fees at the level of Full Fee Paying Overseas Students. For details [contact us here](#).

Enrolment for students with visas granting temporary residency can only be offered until the expiry date of the current visa. Continuing enrolment will be dependent on evidence that a new visa subclass has been issued by DIAC. Parents/carers of students who are not Australian citizens must ensure that the school is provided with evidence of any change to the student's visa status throughout their enrolment period.



### **Students holding visa subclass 571**

(enrolled in systemic schools, Diocese of Parramatta, prior to 01/01/2012)

## IF MY CHILD ATTENDS A CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL WILL THEY BE AUTOMATICALLY ACCEPTED INTO A CATHOLIC SECONDARY SCHOOL?

A child who has completed primary education in a Catholic Diocesan primary school will *usually* be offered continuity of enrolment in a Catholic Diocesan secondary school. If no places exist at the school of choice, contact your DSP to assist the family to enrol in another Catholic secondary school in the Diocese.

## IF MY CHILDREN ARE ATTENDING A STATE SCHOOL CAN THEY MOVE TO A CATHOLIC SCHOOL?

Yes, subject to the enrolment criteria and availability of places within each school.

## DO PRIMARY SCHOOLS PROVIDE CHILD CARE BEFORE AND AFTER SCHOOL?

A growing number of our schools provide before and after school care or are close to council or private before and after school care centres. Contact the school you are interested in to find out if before and after school care is available at the school or close by.

## FUNDING & SCHOOL FEES

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### WHAT IF I CAN'T AFFORD TO PAY THE SCHOOL FEES?

Parents unable to pay school fees because of financial hardship are invited to confidentially approach their principal who will respond to their situation with care and sensitivity.

***No student will be refused enrolment because of a family's genuine inability to pay fees.***

### WHAT ARE THE SCHOOL FEES?

Annual tuition fees in Catholic systemic schools range from \$996 in primary schools to \$2,391 in senior secondary. There are very significant discounts for the second and third children enrolled from the one family. There are no fees for the fourth and subsequent school children.

In addition to the tuition fees, there is a Diocesan School Building Levy of \$645 per family per year. A service fee is also set by each school. Contact the school to find out what service fees are payable.

For more detailed information see our section on [Fees](#).

## HOW ARE CATHOLIC SCHOOLS FUNDED?

There is some confusion in the community about the issue of funding of both government and non-government schools.

To clarify this issue you need to take into account both Federal and State funding, as well as contributions from parents, to get the full story about how governments fund schools.

In the 2002-2003 financial year, the **Federal government** allocated 67% of its education budget to non-government schools (including Catholic schools). The remaining 33% was allocated to government schools.<sup>+</sup>

This meant that Catholic schools received more Federal funds than government schools.

In the same period, the NSW **State government** allocated 7.3% of its education budget to non-government schools. The remaining 92.7% was allocated to government schools.<sup>+</sup>

This meant that government schools received more State funds than Catholic schools.

When **Federal and State funding** are combined, the average student in a government school receives considerably more funding than a student in a Catholic school.

In the 2003-2004 financial year, **NSW government schools** received \$8,227 per student from Federal and State sources. By contrast, **NSW Catholic systemic schools** received \$5,933 per student from Federal and State sources (2004 calendar year). (Schools owned and operated by the Religious Orders are funded using a different formula.)

In other words, each NSW Catholic systemic school student received, on average, \$2,294 **less** in government funding than a student in a government school. This gap is partly offset by fees, building levies and other charges paid by parents, as well as by support from parishes.

<sup>+</sup> Source: *Productivity Commission (Australia), Review of Government Service Provision, Report on Government Services 2005, Volume 1, Part B 'Education'. Report published 28 January 2005.*

## CUTS TO SCHOOL EDUCATION FUNDING

As you know from July 2013, the NSW Premier Barry O'Farrell is planning to cut school education funding by \$1.7 billion and cap the level of funding to non-government schools over the next four years.

Additionally, the current funding model - which links state education expenditure to federal government funding - means for every \$1 of state funding lost we stand to lose \$3 dollars in federal funding (public schools stand to lose 30c in federal funding).

While there is still some uncertainty about the actual amount of the loss, we know this will have a substantial impact on the amount of government funding Catholic schools receive in the Diocese of Parramatta.

## DO I NEED TO APPLY FOR A SIBLING DISCOUNT ON DIOCESAN TUITION FEES?

Please click on the **Sibling Discount Applicable Schools** attachment to see if your school is listed:




[Searchable spreadsheet version](#)



[PDF version](#)

If your school is listed with the comment **Discount Automatically Applied** in the Advice Required column, you do not need to do anything further.

If any of your children attend a school listed with the comment **Sibling Advice Notice Required** in the Advice Required column please take the following action:

1. Open and print out the  [Sibling Registration for Diocesan Tuition Fees](#) form;
2. Complete the form in full, listing all children attending Catholic Schools in 2012; and
3. Post the completed form to the address at the bottom of the form.

If your school is not shown in the attachment list we are unfortunately unable to grant a sibling discount in relation to your child's attendance at that school.

## GENERAL SCHOOL INFORMATION

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### WHAT AREA DOES THE PARRAMATTA DIOCESE COVER?

The Diocese of Parramatta is located in one of the fastest growing areas of New South Wales. The diocese is west of Sydney and reaches from Dundas Valley, west to Katoomba, south to Luddenham, and north to Richmond.

There are 78 Catholic systemic schools in the diocese (56 primary and 22 secondary) with a total student population of around 43,000 students. There are also six congregational Catholic schools which, while being independent, remain important members of the wider community of schools serving the Church.

The ongoing population shift to the west of Sydney continues to increase the demand for Catholic education in this diocese, with an average of one new school opening each year.

The final responsibility for Catholic schools in the Parramatta Diocese rests with the Bishop of the diocese, who delegates responsibilities to the Executive Director of Schools.

### ARE THERE ANY SELECTIVE CATHOLIC SCHOOLS?

Catholic schools provide a comprehensive education so all students experience an equally high standard of instruction in all subject areas. For this reason there are no selective Catholic schools in the Parramatta Diocese.

Where a child shows particular aptitude or talent, the school will seek to develop that talent through enrichment programs, gifted and talented programs, or acceleration where appropriate.

### WHAT FACILITIES AND RESOURCES DO THE SCHOOLS PROVIDE?

Our schools have well-equipped library/resource centres and utilise the latest technology to engage students in their learning. This includes access to computers, the internet, multimedia equipment and other tools for learning. Many of our schools use data projectors, interactive white boards and other teaching aids.

The Teacher Learning Resource Centre at Mt Druitt, incorporating information technology, professional development and library services, is a focal point for enhancing teaching and learning throughout the diocese.

Contact your local Catholic school for more information regarding their specific facilities and resources.

## ARE SCHOOLS ACCESSIBLE BY PUBLIC TRANSPORT?

Most schools in the Parramatta Diocese are easily reached by public transport.

Students in Kindergarten to Year 2 are automatically eligible for free public transport to and from school. Students in other years may be eligible depending on the distance from home to school. Details of public transport arrangements will be provided by the school at the time of enrolment.

## ARE STUDENTS COVERED BY INSURANCE IN CASE OF ACCIDENTS?

Personal accident insurance is provided at no cost for all students enrolled in systemic Catholic schools in the Parramatta Diocese. The insurance policy, known as School Care, covers students while at school and includes travel between school and home, and any activities sponsored by the school (such as school organised excursions, sport and secondary work experience).

The cover is broad and includes up to \$5000 towards medical and hospital costs not covered by Medicare, up to \$1000 for emergency transport, up to \$1000 for home tuition, and varying amounts for compensation of a range of serious injuries.

A copy of the insurance brochure is available from schools.

## HOW IS DISCIPLINE APPROACHED IN CATHOLIC SCHOOLS?

Catholic schools have a fine reputation for pastoral care and the positive discipline of students. Our schools believe that discipline works best when there is a partnership between parents, teachers and students.

Each school has a pastoral care policy which focuses on self-discipline. The policy sets out codes of behaviour, rights and responsibilities of students, and the consequences of inappropriate behaviour.

In addition, our schools have programs, like restorative practice, that encourage students to resolve conflict and problem solve in positive ways.

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## FURTHER INFORMATION

See our '*Student Management*' category of the [Policies and Procedures](#) page

Contact your local Catholic school for more information.

## WHAT ARE PUPIL-FREE DAYS?

On four (4) days each year schools have pupil-free days so staff can undertake essential whole-school planning and professional development. On these days students are asked not to attend school. The first day of school each year is nominated as a pupil-free day and three (3) other days throughout the year. Check with your school to find out when these days have been scheduled.

## DOES MY CHILD HAVE TO WEAR A SCHOOL UNIFORM?

Each school has an official school uniform that is agreed on by the school principal and parents.

Students are expected to wear the school uniform. Where this creates economic difficulty for parents, the parish will often assist by providing a uniform. Many schools also have 'uniform pools' where second-hand uniforms are provided at a reduced cost.

Contact your local Catholic school for more information.



## WHAT DO CATHOLIC SCHOOLS OFFER?

Catholic schools are extremely popular. In fact, they enrol about 20 per cent of Australian school students.

Many parents say they have made their educational choice for reasons such as:

1. ***Catholic schools are faith-based places that are grounded in Christian values***

The Catholic faith is not just taught in Religious Education classes but is experienced within the total culture of the school. Christian values are up front and explicit.

Catholic schools are intrinsically connected to the parish in which they reside and are an integral part of the mission and life of the Church.

2. ***Catholic schools strive to achieve very high standards of education***

Expectations of achievement and conduct are high. While there is a focus on the individual child, a broad curriculum caters for a wide range of interests and abilities.

3. ***They are safe yet challenging places***

Relationships are warm and friendly. Parents, students, teachers and pastors see themselves as working in partnership. The children belong to a community that really cares about each one of them.

## WHAT ARE THE SCHOOL TERM DATES?

School term dates and holidays are generally the same as government schools.

[Click here for a list of school term dates.](#)

## LEARNING & TEACHING

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### WHAT IS TAUGHT IN CATHOLIC SCHOOLS?

Catholic schools teach the same curriculum as government schools. Expectations of achievement and conduct are high. With a strong focus on the individual, a broad curriculum caters for a wide range of interests and abilities.

The curriculum covers:

- Religious Education
- Mathematics
- Science
- Technology and Applied Studies (TAS)
- English
- Human Society and its Environment (HSIE)
- Creative and Practical Arts
- Personal Development
- Health and Physical Education
- Languages other than English

Secondary schools also offer a range of vocational education courses, some of which have industry accreditation. These are delivered by specially trained teachers. Students also have access through their schools to TAFE delivered vocational programs, and in some cases, university courses.

For further information see the [Teaching & Learning](#) section of our website.

## WHAT QUALIFICATIONS DO CATHOLIC SCHOOL TEACHERS HAVE?

Our teachers are highly qualified and trained. Most teachers in our schools are four-year trained and many have post-graduate qualifications. The Catholic Education Office considers the professional development of teachers to be very important and offers them more than 200 courses each year.

## IS EVERYONE TAUGHT RELIGIOUS EDUCATION?

Religion has a very important role in the life of a Catholic school and all primary and secondary students study Religious Education. The schools share in the mission of the Church which is based on a rich heritage of faith and tradition.

Teachers are specially trained and accredited to teach the diocesan Religious Education program, *Sharing Our Story*. This comprehensive program was developed in the Parramatta Diocese and is approved by the Bishop. Senior secondary students (Years 11-12) can undertake either *Sharing Our Story* or Studies of Religion as a HSC subject.

All students in Catholic schools also take part in activities such as regular prayer, liturgy and retreat programs to develop their faith.

## HOW MUCH HOMEWORK WILL MY CHILD HAVE?

Each school develops a homework policy in consultation with parents. Generally homework begins about halfway through Kindergarten when the children are given very simple and enjoyable activities that usually involve reading.

The amount of homework given, and level of difficulty, naturally increases with each year of schooling. In Years 11 and 12 students will have a more demanding homework schedule to assist them to achieve their personal best in the Higher School Certificate. Homework is most effective when parents take an active interest.

## WHAT OTHER PROGRAMS AND INITIATIVES ARE AVAILABLE?

### ***Aboriginal education***

Aboriginal education is incorporated into the curriculum from Kindergarten through to Year 12. Many schools also have special Aboriginal study units such as Aboriginal Languages and Aboriginal Cultural Experiences.

### ***Literacy and numeracy***

The schools in the Parramatta Diocese place particular emphasis on literacy and numeracy. Extra teachers, special reading programs and professional development courses for teachers ensure that the literacy and numeracy needs of the children receive constant attention.

### ***Help with English***

English as a Second Language (ESL) programs are available for those children whose parents' first language is not English.

### ***Gifted and Talented***

Many schools have Gifted and Talented programs which provide students with the opportunity to extend themselves.

### ***Children with special needs***

All schools in the Parramatta Diocese strive to provide for students with special needs. If your child needs special consideration discuss this with the principal at the time of application for enrolment.

Each school has a designated Special Education teacher who is able to assist children with disabilities, whether visual, hearing, intellectual, physical, communication, learning or behavioural.

For more detailed information refer to [Special Education](#)

## COMPULSORY SCHOOLING FAQs

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### IS SCHOOLING COMPULSORY?

In NSW school attendance is compulsory for children over the age of six years until the minimum school leaving age of 17 years. Students must complete Year 10 and after Year 10, until they turn 17 years of age, students must be:

- in school or registered for home schooling, or
- in approved education or training (e.g. TAFE, traineeship, apprenticeship)
- in full-time, paid employment (average 25 hours per week) or in a combination of work, education and/or training.

## WHAT IF MY CHILD HAS TO BE AWAY FROM SCHOOL?

If your child has to be absent from school, you **must** tell the school and provide a reason for your child's absence. To explain an absence parents and carers may:

- send a note, fax or email to the school
- telephone the school, or
- visit the school

Your school will inform you of the required procedures for notifying them.

A small number of absences may be justified if your child has to:

- go to a special religious ceremony
- is required to attend to a serious and/or urgent family situation (e.g. a funeral)
- is too sick to go to school or has an infectious illness

Children need to arrive on school and class on time. Lateness to school or leaving early from school must be recorded as a partial absence. Your school will inform you of the required procedures for late arrivals and early departures from school.

## WHAT IS AN APPLICATION FOR EXEMPTION?

If you consider that it is in your child's best interests to be exempted from the legal requirement to attend school for any length of time, you **must** apply to the principal for an exemption. The school will provide an *Application for Exemption from Attendance at School* form, and assist you to complete it, if necessary. The principal will consider your application and decide whether to grant a *Certificate of Exemption from Attendance at School*.

## WHAT ARE THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE SCHOOL PRINCIPAL?

Principals help to ensure the safety, welfare and wellbeing of your child. They **must** also keep accurate records of student attendance. Principals are able to question requests for a child to be absent from school and are also responsible for deciding if the reason given for an absence is justified. Principals may request medical certificates or other documentation for long or frequent absences explained by parents as being due to illness.

When absences are unexplained by parents, or explanations are not accepted by the principal, the school will work with parents to identify the reasons for non-attendance and put in place strategies so the child can return to school. Principals may ask support staff or other agencies to assist.

## WHAT IF MY CHILD CONTINUES TO HAVE UNSATISFACTORY ATTENDANCE?

It is important to understand that the NSW Department of Education and Communities (DEC), on behalf of the State Minister for Education, may take further action in cases where children of compulsory school age have recurring numbers of unexplained or unacceptable absences from school. The following actions may be taken in these cases:

### **Attendance meetings**

Parents, and sometimes their child, can be asked to attend a meeting with school and Catholic Education Office personnel and in some cases, DEC regional officers. The aim of the meeting is to help identify strategies to support the child and family and remove barriers to non-attendance. Other agencies may also be invited, if parents agree.

### **Compulsory attendance conferences**

If school attendance does not improve, parents and sometimes their child, can be asked to attend a compulsory attendance conference. The conference, which will be run by a trained conference convenor, aims to help the school, parents and other agencies to further identify the issue impacting on a child's attendance. The outcome of a compulsory attendance conference is for the parties to agree to undertake certain actions to improve the child's attendance. These actions are agreed in writing.

### **Compulsory schooling order**

If previous attempts to resolve the issue of a child's attendance are not successful, legal compliance can be sought through an application to the Children's Court for a Compulsory Schooling Order. The aim is to assist a family and/or child to address the issues preventing satisfactory school attendance. This has the added enforcement of a Court's powers.

### **Prosecution**

If all attempts by schools, the Catholic Education Office and DEC regional support staff fail to improve a child's attendance, action can be taken in the Local Court with the result of fines being imposed up to a maximum of \$11,000.

## DO YOU NEED AN INTERPRETER?

Interpreting services are provided where possible for parents and carers who do not speak or understand English well and for Deaf parents and carers who use sign language. For more information on interpreter services contact your school or phone the Telephone Interpreter Service and have them contact the school. The telephone number to ring is 131 450. Ask for an interpreter in the required language and the interpreter will call the school and stay on the line to assist you with your conversation. You will not be charged for this service.

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