

PASTORAL CARE POLICY

Purpose or Rationale

Villanova College is an independent Catholic College from Years 5 - 12 “striving for excellence in boys’ education as an Augustinian community one in mind and heart on the way towards God”.ⁱ It is a College where education is the formation of the whole person within a faith community. The staff, parents and students both past and present contribute their gifts and talents towards the development of young men of Gospel values who seek the common good. The community promotes life-long learning through continually challenging itself in the restless search for Truth.ⁱⁱ

Villanova College embraces the living tradition of the Catholic Church, enriching the mission of the Archdiocese of Brisbane, with its Augustinian charism and organisational independence. It is witness to the Gospel vision of life, centered on Christ, and challenges those values of contemporary Australian society which erode the dignity of the human person.ⁱⁱⁱ It embraces the gospel values of loving care, faith, honesty, integrity, service, reconciliation, mercy, compassion, forgiveness and justice. It follows the Augustinian values, known at Villanova College as the Gateway Values, of interiority, search for truth and quality of community life which are important in developing in students a sense of self respect, self-discipline and responsibility in all areas of their lives.

Pastoral Care is the merciful response to each member of the school community which affirms, promotes and celebrates the well-being of each member. It is based on belief in the value, uniqueness and potential of each person who is created in the image of God.^{iv} The pastoral care of students, parents and staff is a very important part of the character of the College.

The purpose of this policy is to:

- provide a framework of principles to support pastoral care at the College that are guided by Gospel values and give expression to Augustinian vision, mission, values and ethos;
- outline the actions the College takes to practically implement this policy.

Policy

Villanova College recognises the intrinsic dignity of each person and their right to be cared for, as well as the obligation to care for others. The College strives to be a community characterised by caring relationships, which are integral to and permeate the daily life of the College and cannot be restricted to a particular program or curriculum. It is committed to valuing and nurturing the uniqueness of each individual within its community by providing a school environment where the safety and welfare of all is positively promoted. It is committed to ensuring that authentic expressions of Gospel and Augustinian values are reflected in all aspects of College life.

Implementation

Scope of Policy

This Policy applies to all members of College staff, all students and parents.



Principles

1. Pastoral care is the responsibility of all members of the College community. In particular, it is the responsibility of all staff, not just those with formally identified pastoral care responsibilities.
2. Pastoral care underpins the College curriculum, structures and programs, values the diverse gifts of each person and supports them through the stages of their personal growth physically, intellectually, emotionally, socially, and spiritually according to their unique circumstances.
3. Pastoral care underpins the promotion and nurturing of student wellbeing in the College which is the central component of a high-quality education, sits at the heart of effective learning and is centred on connection and belonging.
4. The Pastoral Care Program, consistent with Augustinian Values, aims to: establish a connection between each student, staff and the College which promotes a sense of belonging; assist students to become dynamic and passionate members of the College community; build a culture that celebrates difference and diversity; imbues students with an understanding of their power as authors of their lives.
5. The College strives to provide pastoral care to all members of the College community.
6. The College endeavours to provide a safe, supportive and inclusive environment.
7. The College works hard to provide structures and processes which promote mutual trust, honesty, respect and opportunities for mentoring in relationships amongst all members of the College community.
8. The College endeavours to provide an environment where staff share with parents a particular responsibility for the spiritual, intellectual, physical, social and emotional well-being of each individual student in order to reduce risk-taking behaviours and minimise harm.
9. The College strives to ensure that the dignity and worth of each person is continually affirmed and that each student and staff member is known and recognised.
10. The College encourages students to develop and exercise self-discipline and take appropriate responsibility for their actions and learning.
11. The College strives to support students in their decision-making processes as they seek to live out Gospel and Augustinian values. The values to be promoted in the exercise of pastoral care at the College include love, faith, honesty, justice, integrity, service, commitment and endeavour, honouring diversity, responsibility, compassion, forgiveness, self-discipline and respect for oneself and others.

Practical Implementation

The College recognises that the effectiveness of pastoral care depends to a significant extent on the staff's ability to implement it. While recognising the need to care for each individual, a balance needs to be maintained between the demands of an individual on the resources of the College and the needs of the whole College community. With these considerations in mind, the College puts these principles into practice by undertaking the following actions:

1) Induction and Formation Processes

This policy, and the procedures and practices that flow from it, are part of the staff, student and parent induction and formation processes on an ongoing basis and are included in the relevant publications of the college.

2) Pastoral Care Team

The College provides an experienced pastoral care leadership team. The College provides this pastoral network in the event that it needs to assist particular students or to refer students to a College psychologist, counsellor or professional groups outside the College.

3) Staff Professional Development

The College encourages and supports staff in accessing a wide range of professional development opportunities in the area of pastoral care.

4) College Education Program

The College incorporates programs on aspects of pastoral care, resilience and wellbeing within the formal school curriculum to meet the needs of all students in its care.

The College's education program is underpinned by its value-led approach to authentic pastoral care and its commitment to take a whole-of-College approach to the wellbeing of Students.

The program has two inter-related components of education and referral and counselling.

(i) Health Education Program and Mental Wellbeing

The College seeks to educate its students at the various stages of schooling in the value of a healthy lifestyle. The College's Health Education Program includes the teaching of factual information about attitudes and values, decision-making skills and appropriate information about support systems.

(ii) Referral and Counselling

The pastoral care system which exists at the College provides a structure for referral and counselling. Specialist support for students, parents and staff is provided by College counsellors. The College makes counselling services available to those who voluntarily seek help with issues associated with wellbeing. Discretion and confidentiality are observed as requested.

5) Academic Care and Extracurricular Programs

The College additionally provides:

- a student behaviour management program that is primarily educational by adoption of a Restorative Practices philosophy, which is in keeping with the Augustinian approach to education and behaviour management;
- Enhanced learning support and programs for students with needs;
- Formal and informal programs to allow all students to engage with their academic studies;
- Programs and structures to support students with culturally, linguistically and diverse backgrounds to engage in the College community;
- A transformative school camp program where strong relationships among students and between teachers and students are forged and where new life skills are developed through undertaking a range of challenging activities unique to each year level camp.



- extracurricular opportunities in sport, music, debating and performing and visual arts programs. Additional clubs and activities also allow students to explore a range of interests.

6) Accountability

The College requires all members of the College community to be accountable for their words and actions in the light of this policy.

Evaluation and Review

This policy is to be reviewed after three (3) years or earlier to take account of any changes to relevant legislation or regulations or to the College's operations and practices and to make sure it remains appropriate to the changing environment.

Review Date: October 2023.

Endorsement: This policy was approved and endorsed by the Villanova College Board on 21 October 2020.

References

i Villanova College Vision Statement; *Rule of St Augustine*, 1 (taken from Acts 4:32).

ii Villanova College Mission Statement.

iii Villanova College Guiding Principles.

iv Genesis 1:27.

v Villanova College acknowledges the assistance it received in drafting this section on Principles from the All Hallows' Policy on Pastoral Care and Well-being (2018).
