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## 6.1 PASTORAL CARE/WELFARE POLICY

JANUARY 2008

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### Rationale

St Mary's Coptic Orthodox College is committed to providing individual care through a strong network of support that fosters the physical, psychological and emotional needs of our students. Our school has the aim of developing a caring community based on Coptic Orthodox Christian values where relationships are supportive and productive and all individuals are respected and valued. We aim to provide an environment that provides diverse opportunities in which young people feel safe to explore, develop and grow.

Effective Pastoral care is built upon a partnership between the College, parents and the Church. Parents and guardians are an essential part of the pastoral care network in the College and will be consulted on all important issues concerning their children and where possible should be included in decision-making processes. It is essential therefore that there be open and efficient communication between the College, home and the Church.

Relations between staff and students are based on trust and a mutual respect for one another. Pastoral care respects the personal rights and confidences of each individual. Staff are informed on a "need to know" basis of information pertinent to the care of any individual student. Where it is deemed appropriate students will be referred on to those with professional expertise for help and guidance.

***It must be noted that the College does not condone or use Corporal Punishment and the college will not accept any excuse for the use of such punishment.***

### Aims

- To provide a Christian educational environment which recognises, values and builds student self esteem.
- To assist students to lead physically, spiritually and emotionally balanced lives.
- The school is a positive Christian environment which is endeavouring to provide successful experiences for all children, where children feel safe and secure in a supportive environment where a sense of belonging and wellbeing are strengthened.
- Children develop positive social behaviours and problem solving skills.
- Communication processes and protocols are clear and well known to ensure the effectiveness of student welfare support.

Every student has the right to be cared for intellectually, physically, psychologically, and emotionally. Pastoral care involves providing for the following student needs:

- Spiritual and emotional well-being
- Self esteem, confidence and self discipline
- A sense of safety, security and physical well-being
- Acceptance, identity and belonging
- Constructive social relationships and effective interpersonal skills
- Career and vocational guidance
- Spirituality, religious meaning and moral development
- Experiences of success, achievement and realization of potential through a balanced programme of curricular and co-curricular activities
- Leadership opportunities
- Diverse experiences and challenges
- Personal development (sexuality, drug and alcohol awareness) through programmed activities.

### **Implementation**

Pastoral care affects the lives of staff, students and families associated with the College and is the responsibility of all.

- The school will appoint a staff member who will coordinate pastoral programme across the school.
- The pastoral care co-ordinator will work in conjunction with the Director, the college priest on any sensitive pastoral care issues. If necessary, and where the college sees a legal responsibility, the pastoral care co-ordinator may pass on issues of concerns to Human Services Victoria.
- The school will adopt a proactive and strategic stance with issues of student welfare.
- The school will implement programme support structures which prioritize and address the identified needs of individual students or the school as a whole and that help implement the aims of the policy.
- The school will endeavour to implement, encourage and reward which support, such as:
  - Buddies
  - Student Awards
  - Drug Education
  - Transition Programs
  - House system
  - Junior school support program
  - Middle years intervention program
  - Orientation programs
  - Camp program

- Careers advisor
- Community service

### Chapel

Each day students of St Mary's Coptic Orthodox College spend half an hour at chapel. Here we pray as a school and the students experience religious instruction from a member of the clergy, the welfare officer or religion teachers.

### Year Level Co-ordinators and Teachers

Coordinators and homeroom teachers are vital links between home and school. Student achievement and discipline issues are communicated to parents and guardians through the student's diary, telephone conversations and face to face meetings.

### Welfare Co-ordinator

The school welfare coordinator provides counseling and support for the welfare of students and their families. Our counselors are available to work with individual students, small groups of students or class groups

When issues arise we focus on the individual as a whole as much as possible. We believe that the Spiritual (The Church), the Family (The Home), The Social (Friends) and the Academic (The School) are important aspects of each individual at our college.

We believe that when the Church and the Family work with the school to support the individual, the outcomes are positive and productive.

We need to work hand in hand to assist our children and young people to grow as well balanced Orthodox Christian citizens living in Australia.

We are all members of the One Body of Our Lord Jesus Christ and we are all valuable. This means that each person is unique and different and just as valuable as the next person.

### Leadership opportunities

Elected students have accepted positions at St. Mary's in which their role is to support and promote the Coptic Orthodox ethos of the College in and outside the school. They work directly with Student Leaders Committee and the Head of Primary or the Head of Secondary.

Leadership positions available to students include – school captain, class captain, class vice-captain, student ambassadors (years 7-10) and student leaders (V.C.E.). Some examples of the activities our school leaders have been involved with include fund raising, ushering at the school production and welcoming important visitors to our school.

Student leaders may lose their leadership position as a result of inappropriate behaviour.

Expectations of the role may include:

- ❖ Fulfillment of all requirements of the College Contract
  - ❖ Attendance at various leadership in-service days
  - ❖ Availability to promote and represent the College at Church and other outside functions
  - ❖ Involvement with students and staff in special activities during the year.
  - ❖ Being able to lead a team of students in various activities.
- The school will provide the following support structures: -
    1. Supporting the response to protracted student absences
    2. Supporting the Protocol for Mandatory Reporting
    3. Support for children in need
  - Student work and achievements will be regularly showcased and publicly recognised.
  - St Mary's will value and encourage student individuality, differences and diversity.
  - Strategies detailed in the "Seeing Red" program will be implemented in the Primary area.
  - In 2007 the Pastoral Care coordinator will discuss the program with the Primary staff.
  - Staff will be professionally serviced on "Seeing Red"
  - The school will provide a pastoral care counsellor who is sensitive to the need of the Coptic community.
  - Programs dealing with issues such as Drug Education will form part of the school's Pastoral Care programme
  - A pastoral care co-ordinator will be provided with professional development regarding student wellbeing, the implementation of wellbeing programs, and the resolution of wellbeing issues.
  - The school will endeavour to cater for: -
    - Children identified with specific welfare issues, developing appropriate individual programs including goals, monitoring performance and behaviour, and providing ongoing support.

### House system

The House system is a primary structure in helping develop students' sense of belonging to the school and also in fostering school and community spirit.

Through the house system we aim to provide a range of opportunities (sporting, social, and cultural) in which all students may participate and which contribute to a sense of community and of shared interest. The vertical structure of the House system provides cross-age peer support and interaction.

Additionally our house system aims to help cultivate and identify student leadership within the College and to strengthen student identity within the College and the Houses, further fostering House/school spirit.

### Junior school support program

Year Seven Home Room teachers are mindful of the difficulties that students face during the transition period. Home Room teachers at Year Seven teach their Home Room for at least one subject. This enables the students to develop a strong relationship with their Home Room teacher.

Most SOSE and English classes are taken by the same teacher for each group at years 7 and 8, this also follows for Maths and Science classes. The aim of this measure is to provide a high level of pastoral care and stability for our junior students.

### Middle year's intervention program

The year 9 middle year's intervention program involves withdrawal of 25% of the class on a one group per term basis. This group then chooses a Bloom's activity or activities from their text response and works on it as a collaborative learning exercise. For example one group, studying "Angel's Gate", created a web page learning and using the "Dreamweaver" program. Another group made a video of the "Etiquette of Eating a Fish Head" based on the novel "The True Story of Lillie Stubeck". A third group created fossil pictures and illustrated for Literature Circle activities.

### Orientation programs

Orientation programs are provided to assist transition from primary school to year 7 and then for each additional promotion to a new year level in the Secondary school. These programs are run by the relevant year level coordinator and provide students with information in regard to the changes that they will experience and the expectations of them as students in the following year.

### Camp program

Year-level camps are planned as part of the welfare policy of the College and it is strongly encouraged that all students of that particular level attend. Camps assist with peer friendships and healthy bonding between students and teachers as well as providing new and enriching experiences for our students.

Our current school program includes the following camp experiences:

Year 7: Adventure camp

Year 9: Surfing and mountain-bike riding camp

Year 10: Horse riding camp

### Careers advisor

St Mary's Coptic Orthodox College aims to provide our students with skills and knowledge that will encourage them to be participating members of Australian society.

Our school's careers advisors works with students from years 10-12. At year 10, in conjunction with the work experience program our students are involved in a careers curriculum where our careers advisor conducts bi-weekly classes covering issues such as resume writing, career options, interview techniques, selection of VCE subjects and tertiary pathways.

At the VCE level our Careers advisor works with students on an individual basis with guidance on tertiary pathways and careers options. Our Careers advisor guides our students through the mechanics of the VTAC Course Link Website, information on and excursions to tertiary information session and open days, as well as help with change of preferences if the need arises.

Community Service

St Mary's Coptic Orthodox College understands the importance of encouraging our students to participate in, and contribute to the wider community both local and global. Our school participates in fund raising for S.I.D.S., the Royal Children's Hospital, Friends in Fiji, Orphans in Egypt and the Association for the Blind. Additionally, we participated in Harmony Day and Democracy week education and celebrations.

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