

PROGRAM SUPPORT GROUP POLICY

Vision

We, at St Mary of the Cross, are an inclusive and welcoming Catholic Community of actively engaged learners.

We model Mary MacKillop’s servant leadership, to nurture compassionate and respectful individuals who translate their beliefs into action.

Introduction

Each student’s education at St Mary of the Cross Catholic Primary School (“the School”) is a partnership between parents, as the first educators of their child, and the School to whom they entrust their child. The engagement of parents is important to each student’s wellbeing, learning and educational outcomes. The School aims to create a welcoming and inclusive Catholic community where there is effective and respectful communication between the home and the School.

There are many opportunities for the School and families to communicate about student supports that have been put into place. The Program Support Group (PSG), or sometimes referred to as Student Support Group (SSG), meeting is one such opportunity where formal communication and decisions generally take place about students with disabilities or diverse learning needs, and requiring substantial and extensive adjustments. This collaboration between home and school is essential for developing and maintaining a positive partnership.

Purpose

These guidelines are designed to assist the School in supporting students with disabilities and/or diverse learning needs, requiring substantial or extensive adjustments to their educational programs. The guidelines are also applicable for students with disabilities and/or diverse learning needs, requiring quality differentiated practices or supplementary adjustments, but at a modified process.

These guidelines provide the School with an operational process to support staff in meeting the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992*, *Disability Standards for Education 2005*, *Equal Opportunity Act 2010* (Vic.), Ministerial Order No. 870 (Child Safe Standards) and Catholic Education Commission Victoria Ltd (CECV) policies and guidelines

1. Planning a Program Support Group

The Program Support Group (PSG) represents a partnership in the educational planning process between the parent/guardian/carer(s), the School and the student, where applicable.

In planning for a PSG meeting, the School follow the cyclical steps outlined in the Catholic Education Commissions Victoria Ltd (CECV) Intervention Framework, and work through the processes of Identification, Targeted Assessment and Data Analysis. The School will then commence specific planning for the Learning and Teaching stage, at which point the School identifies students with diverse learning needs and document ‘where to next’ for these

students. The learning and teaching will then go through the Evaluation stage before the intervention process begins again.

2. Aims

The aims of the Program Support Group are to:

- Ensure that those with the most knowledge of, and responsibility for the student, work together to establish shared goals for the student's education
- Plan reasonable adjustments for the student to access the curriculum and participate in their education
- Provide reasonable educational planning that is ongoing in nature
- Monitor the progress of the student in a reasonable manner

3. Responsibilities

In order to achieve these aims, it is the responsibility of the Program Support Group to:

- Identify the student's needs, interests, strengths, challenges, aspirations, skills and abilities
- Identify the student's progress
- Determine the reasonable adjustments to be made to the curriculum, teaching, learning and/or the environment
- Plan an educational program with reasonable adjustments that is appropriate for the student's intellectual, physical, social and emotional development to address the student's needs for positive achievement, engagement at school and their ability to learn
- Develop and document the students' goals and progress in a Personalised Learning Plan (PLP); and where appropriate a Behaviour Support Plan, Student Safety Plan and Medical Management Plan may be devised
- Discuss the reasonable adjustments and/or plan outlined in the PLP with the student's parent(s)/guardian(s)/carer(s), School staff and the student, if applicable
- Provide advice to the principal concerning the diversity of educational and support needs of the student and the types of resources that may be required to meet these needs
- Review and evaluate the student's program:
 - once per term in a 30-40 minute PSG meeting for students requiring substantial and extensive adjustments
 - once per semester in a 30-40 minute PSG meeting for students requiring quality differentiated teaching practices and supplementary adjustments.

Note: Teachers will continually review and evaluate the student's program in light of student progress and report this via the Program Support Group meeting, or via 10-20 minute

Parent-Teacher Consultations as needed or requested by the teacher or the parent(s)/guardian(s)/carer(s) outside of the PSG meeting times.

By the end of the Program Support Group meeting or Parent-Teacher Consultation, there should be a written summary of the issues discussed and/or plan of agreed actions. These should include the issue, the action and the person responsible.

In addition:

- The discussion points from the meeting should be reviewed with the group at the end of the meeting and all members should sign and date the meeting minutes before the conclusion of the Program Support Group meeting
- All attendees of the meeting should receive a copy of the unsigned minutes, unless an attendee requests for a signed copy by all attendees.

4. Membership

A Program Support Group consists of:

- Parent(s)/guardian(s)/carer(s) of the student.
- Advocate for the parent(s)/guardian(s)/carer(s) where nominated by them.
Note: The Advocate cannot be in receipt of a fee for their services (see 4.5)
- Student's Homeroom teacher(s) and/or other relevant School staff
- Principal or a member of the senior Leadership Team (Deputy Principal or Learning Diversity Leader) as the principal's nominee and chairperson
- Student (where appropriate)
- The School's invited consultants to the PSG (e.g. Catholic Education Office staff, external professionals such as a psychologist, speech pathologist, occupational therapist, physiotherapist, school advisor/s and visiting teacher/s).
- Interpreter (where necessary)

The number and choice of the **consultants** should be agreed to by all members of the Program Support Group. Uninvited consultants will not be able to participate in the PSG meeting.

The information provided by the consultant/s will be for the consideration of the group in decision making. Consultants do not have a role in the final decision making process of the Program Support Group.

The School respects that the parent/guardian/carer(s) may support the recommendations offered by the Consultant/s. Should the School deem the information provided by the consultant/s as unreasonable or creates a disturbance or disruptions to the student, other students and/or staff, the School will have the final decision after considering its reasonableness, feasibility of its implementation and the School's available resources.

Where a student with a disability is attending two schools (**dual enrolment**), the principal (or nominee) of the other school will be an invited member of the Parent Support Group.

Where a student is being supported through the **transition** to or from St Mary of the Cross Catholic Primary School with another school/Kindergarten/preschool, with parent consent, a representative from the other school/Kindergarten/preschool should be invited to a Program Support Group meeting.

4.1 Principal or Principal's Nominee

When a parent/guardian/carer seeks to enrol a child with a disability into the School, the principal or the principal's nominee should provide them with information about specific support available to facilitate the student's participation in the School's educational program.

It is the responsibility of the principal or the principal's nominee to facilitate the collaborative processes of the Program Support Group by offering support to all members and ensuring their participation. For this to occur, the principal or the principal's nominee may enlist the support of an interpreter, advocate or other organisations providing support (where appropriate).

The principal or principal's nominee shall convene and chair Program Support Group meetings on a regular basis, once a term for students requiring substantial and extensive adjustments; and once a semester for students requiring quality differentiated practices and supplementary adjustments. The principal or principal's nominee ensures that accurate records of the Program Support Group meetings are kept and provided to all members.

4.2 Classroom Teacher / Homeroom Teacher

The Homeroom teacher will provide the Program Support Group with current information regarding the student's progress and determine future educational goals and their reasonable adjustments. The Homeroom teacher documents these in the student's Personalised Learning Plan prior to the PSG meeting. These will be presented to the Program Support Group members at the meeting, and reviewed.

It is the Homeroom teacher's responsibility to ensure that the student has access to the School's educational programs and implements the classroom content of Learning and Support Plans. Other staff working with the student do so under the direction of a nominated teacher or the Learning Diversity Leader.

4.3 Parent/Guardian/Carer(s)

Parent/guardian/carer(s) play a vital role in the Program Support Group. They have a holistic understanding of the child and provide ongoing involvement in their education. Parent/guardian/carer(s) provide knowledge and experience of previous events that may influence programming decisions. Parent/guardian/carer(s) are able to contribute to the goals and strategies that may support the education of their child, including their transition to other schools.

The parent/guardian/carer(s) is responsible for providing the principal and/or the Learning Diversity Leader accurate and up-to-date information about their child's circumstances insofar as these may impact upon their child's physical, functional, emotional and/or education needs, particularly where the School is required to provide additional support to the child (see the School's Enrolment Explanatory Statement 8.1).

The parent/guardian/carer(s) must provide any additional information as may be requested by the School, including copies of documents such as medical/specialist reports (where relevant to the child's schooling), reports from previous schools, court orders or parenting arrangements (see the School's Enrolment Explanatory Statement 8.2).

Where, during the course of a child's enrolment, new information becomes available that is material to the child's educational and/or safety/wellbeing needs, it is a term of the child's continuing enrolment that such information is provided to the school promptly (see the School's Enrolment Explanatory Statement 8.3).

4.4 Student

Where appropriate, the student should be part of the program development process. In some cases, the student's age or severity of disability may restrict direct participation. However, in all cases, the preferences and interests of the student, regardless of how they are expressed, should be actively considered when planning programs

4.5 Parent/Guardian/Carer(s)' Advocate

A parent/guardian/carer may be accompanied and supported by an advocate to assist their full participation in planning and supporting the student's program and in making decisions about the student.

The role of the parent/guardian/carer(s)' advocate in the Program Support Group is a constructive, supportive and enabling one.

It may include:

- encouraging the sharing of the parent/guardian/carer(s)' knowledge, skills and perceptions about the student with the Program Support Group
- discussing any difficulties or uncertainties being experienced by the parent/guardian/carer(s) in participating in the Parent Support Group
- assisting the development of a co-operative and collaborative working relationship between the parent/guardian/carer(s) and the school community
- assisting the parent/guardian/carer(s) to understand the School's, Catholic Education Melbourne's and Catholic Education Commission of Victoria Ltd's policies and procedures
- linking the parent/guardian/ carer(s) with relevant services and organisations.

It is the right of the parent/guardian/ carer(s) to have an advocate. If they wish, a parent/guardian/carer(s)' advocate may be a friend, supportive community member, a member of the family or formal advocate. *The advocate is not to be in receipt of a fee.*

See Appendix 1 for a list of organisations that provide parent/guardian/carer(s) support for a range of disabilities. Some organisations listed may incur a fee. St Mary of the Cross do not endorse any of the organisations listed in Appendix 1 nor is the School associated with any of the organisations.

4.6 Interpreter

Where necessary, an interpreter (in languages other than English including Auslan) should be present at the Program Support Group meetings. Interpreters are not members of the Student Support Group. The principal or the principal's nominee will assist in obtaining the services of an interpreter.

4.7 Consultants

The Program Support Group may seek the input from other personnel who have relevant expertise and/or information to:

- assist in the establishment of teaching and learning goals for the student
- provide support in the development of teaching and learning programs
- help determine appropriate strategies to implement agreed teaching and learning programs.

Catholic Education Melbourne (CEM) offers educational support services to students with diverse needs through a referral process. CEM Learning Consultants, speech pathologists and psychologists build the capacity of School staff to support the development and implementation of the student's educational program in order to improve student outcomes and their safety/wellbeing.

In addition, persons who could make a valuable contribution to the Program Support Group include:

- The School's learning area leader/s such as the Literacy Leader, Mathematics Leader and/or Wellbeing Leader
- Specialist School staff
- Learning Support Officers
- Teachers who have taught the student previously and/or other members of staff
- Kindergarten/preschool teachers and/or advisers and/or early intervention staff
- Secondary school staff e.g. Principal or their nominee/s such as Learning Diversity Leader, Additional Needs Coordinator, Year Level Coordinator, House Leader etc
- Specialist School staff for students with dual enrolment e.g. Principal or their nominee/s
- Special education consultants
- Catholic Education Melbourne Speech Pathologist, Psychologist and/or Learning Consultants (for Diversity, Vision Impairment, Hearing Impairment and Chronic Health and Physical impairment).
- Department of Human Services staff
- medical and paramedical practitioners treating the student

5. Operation

A Program Support Group is a vital and ongoing component of planning that is provided for students with diverse learning needs and students with disabilities.

5.1 Meetings

Parent Support Group meetings should be convened on a regular basis. The PSG meetings generally occur towards the end of the school term, or as soon as practicable in some urgent circumstances. Or the parent/guardian/carer(s) may request a PSG to occur earlier at a time and date convenient to all attendees.

The principal or the principal's nominee (e.g. Deputy Principal or Learning Diversity Leader) makes contact with the parent/guardian/carer(s) to arrange a date and time that is suitable for all attendees for the PSG meeting.

The parent/guardian/carer(s) can nominate an advocate to attend the PSG meeting and inform the organiser of the PSG meeting at least one week in advance of the meeting of their attendance. The parent/guardian/carer(s) must inform the school of the advocate's:

- Full name
- Name of organisation
- Title and role in the organisation
- Contact details of the advocate - email and phone number
- Purpose of attending the PSG meeting

The parent/guardian/carer(s) may suggest their wish for a consultant to attend the PSG meeting for the principal's consideration. The parent/guardian/carer(s) must request this in writing (e.g. email or letter) to the principal at least two weeks in advance of the meeting. The parent/guardian/carer(s) must provide the principal with the following information for consideration:

- Full name
- Name of organisation
- Title and role in the organisation
- Contact details of the consultant- email and phone number
- Purpose of attending the PSG meeting

5.2 Frequency and mode

The frequency and mode varies for students with disabilities and/or diverse learning needs requiring different levels of adjustments. See below table for explanation.

Student's Adjustment Level	Frequency of Program Support Group Meeting	Parent-Teacher Consultation with the Homeroom teacher only
Quality Differentiated Teaching Practices	Upon request	Upon request or one per semester
Supplementary	One 30-40 minute meeting every two terms	One 10-20 minute meeting every two terms
Substantial	One 30-40 minute meeting once a term	Upon request
Extensive	One 30-40 minute meeting once a term	Upon request

5.3 Transition times

In the transition from **pre-school/Kindergarten to primary school**, the PSG agenda may include, but not limited to:

- The student's strengths and how he/she learns
- Diagnostic information
- Previous and current early intervention strategies
- Environmental as well as academic and social planning factors
- Orientation planning, such as visits to the primary school's playground and Prep learning space
- The practice of school routines, such as wearing a uniform, recess and lunchtime and break schedules

From **primary to secondary school**, the PSG may include, but not be limited to:

- The selection of a secondary school
- Review and possible renewal of diagnostic documentation and learning profiles
- Sharing of information such as Personalised Learning Plan, Behaviour Support Plan, Student Safety Plan, Medical Management Plan and/or other medical or specialist documentations
- Discussion and planning of the student's program to incorporate changes, if required
- Invitation to key personnel at the secondary school to attend a transition-focused PSG
- Planning of additional visits with specific purposes, e.g. to meet staff, to identify locations such as lockers, toilets, canteen, etc.

Like all Program Support Group meetings, the transition PSGs should be formalised. Minutes should be kept and distributed, and actions followed through by designated members of the group.

5.4 Concerns

Concerns regarding the process used by the Program Support Group or the management of resources by the school should be resolved with the principal.

For more information see the School's Grievances and Complaints Policy.

5.5 Resources

The Catholic Education Commission of Victoria Ltd's, Department of Education and Training Student Support Group Guidelines and the School's policies and guidelines should be utilised as a reference to guide the School's practice.

The *Disability Standards for Education 2005* set out the standards that education providers must comply with to achieve the objects of the *Disability Discriminations Act 1992* in relation to the provision of education and training.

The School follows WorkSafe guidelines under the *Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004* to prevent and/or reduce the risk of injury and illness for students and staff.

The School is aware of and complies with the Australian Privacy Principles under the framework in the Privacy Act 1988 with regards to:

- The collection, use and disclosure of personal information

- The School's governance and accountability
- Integrity and correction of personal information
- The rights of individuals to access their personal information

A breach of an Australian Privacy Principle is an "interference with the privacy of an individual" and can lead to regulatory action and penalties. Therefore, parent/guardian/carer(s) must provide written consent to the School and notify the School of their engagement with the third party (including advocate or consultant) before any staff member is permitted to share any information about their child to an external party.

Appendix 1

Organisations providing support

AMAZE

[AMAZE website](#) Phone: 1300 308 699

ASPECT

[ASPECT website](#) Phone: 1800 277 328

Association for Children with a Disability (ACD)

[ACD website](#) Phone: (03) 9880 7000 (or for rural callers) 1800 654 013

ADEC (Action on Disability within Ethnic Communities) Inc.

[ADEC website](#) Phone: (03) 9480 1666

Better Health Channel

[Better Health Channel website](#)

Blind Citizens Australia

[Blind Citizens Australia website](#) Phone: (03) 9372 6400 (or for country callers) 1800 033 660 TTY: 03 9376 9275

Centre for Community Child Health

[Centre for Community Child Health website](#)

Cerebral Palsy Education Centre

[Cerebral Palsy Education Centre website](#)

Communication Resource Centre

[Communication Resource Centre website](#)

Children's Mobility Service

[Guide Dogs Victoria website](#)

Deaf Children Australia

[Deaf Children Australia website](#)

Diabetes Victoria

<https://www.diabetesvic.org.au>

Down Syndrome Victoria

[Down Syndrome Victoria website](#)

Epilepsy Foundation of Australia

[Epilepsy](#) Foundation of Australia

Fragile X Association of Australia
[Fragile X Association of Australia website](#)

Muscular Dystrophy Association Inc. [Muscular Dystrophy Association website](#) Phone: (03) 9320 9555 (or for country callers) 1800 656 632 [Mu](#)

Parents of Hearing Impaired Children Victorian Federation
Phone: (03) 9772 1260

Parents Victoria
[Parents Victoria website](#) Phone: 0419 716 171 (or for country callers) 1800 032 023

Raising Children Network
[Raising Children Network website](#)

Spina Bifida Foundation
[Spina Bifida Foundation website](#) Phone: (03) 9663 0075

STAR Victoria Inc.
[STAR Victoria website](#) Phone: (03) 9650 2730

Tourette Syndrome Association of Australia
[Tourette Syndrome Association of Australia website](#) Phone: (02) 9382 3726

Victorian Council of School Organisations
[Victorian Council of School Organisations website](#) Phone: (03) 9429 5900