Catholic Education
Diocese of Rockhampton

St Mary's Catholic Primary School Rockhampton

Sustainability Policy

Approved: July 10th 2023 | For Review [July 2028]

Policy Statement

St. Mary's Catholic Primary School acknowledges the importance of integrating sustainable practices to help promote an environmentally aware community. Our school aims to support our community to learn about and implement sustainable practices and foster respect and care for the living and non-living environment.

Description

St. Mary's Catholic Primary School values a whole-school approach to environmental education and awareness. Emulating Pope Francis' 2015 encyclical Laudato Si', our school sustainability policy is committed to ensuring students, staff and the wider community actively participate in promoting ecological stewardship within our school as we create authentic learning opportunities that reflect the seven goals of Laudato Si'.

The school has a duty to prepare future generations with the knowledge and skills to manage the world's resources wisely. Students and staff are expected to demonstrate an active interest in and concern for all natural environments and we hope to encourage each student to recognize their role in tending to our common home.
The policy will address the six core areas of sustainability; education, community, biodiversity, waste, water and energy.

For each of the areas, St. Mary's Catholic Primary School will:

Education:

- Promote ecological values and habits in our students
- Develop a scope and sequence of sustainability education across the school
- Role-model sustainable practices and behaviours. Actions such as reusing water from a sink and switching off lights when not in use can have a large impact on children, who are at a formative stage with respect to skills and attitudes.
- Aim to counteract the 'throwaway' mentality that children experience every day in relation to waste.
- Take every opportunity to talk with children about sustainable practices, and encourage children to take part in these practices. Assign roles such as water, waste and energy monitors to children within the service (consider providing them with badges and charts appropriate to their role). Children are often vigilant at monitoring the behaviour of their peers.
- Create an 'earth hour' each day where no lights/minimal lighting is used e.g. during relaxation times.
- Use a range of pictures, books and stories that address environmental sustainability issues.
- Use improvised, recycled and natural materials for activities.
- Play recycling games to promote an understanding of items that can be recycled.

Community:

- Engage all students and staff in sharing the responsibility of sustainable practices.
- Inform families about this policy and the school's approach to environmental sustainability through information sessions, photo displays and newsletters etc.
- Become involved in community events such as Earth Hour, World Environment Day and Clean Up Australia Day
- Liaise with RAP group and parent groups regarding sustainable projects.

Biodiversity

- Aim to plant indigenous and native flora as preferred vegetation
- Identify areas for improved planting of trees
- Aim to balance the school ecosystem to attract more native fauna
- Enhance the beauty and functionality of St. Mary's Catholic Primary School through student engagement in greening and biodiversity activities such as edible gardening.

- Partnering with local plant nurseries.
- Enhancing/maintaining existing green spaces.
- Promoting gardening clubs.
- Growing edible crops to promote an understanding of food production.
- Educating students that paths are for walking on, not gardens.
- Giving class/year levels some responsibility for managing green spaces adjacent to their classrooms.
- Establishing a yearly tradition of graduating year 6 students leaving a legacy item/space with our school green-space.
- The school should use the school grounds as a source of teaching and learning opportunities for students and outdoor learning is encouraged.

Waste

- Reduce the amount of waste, which will reduce the cost of waste management
- Educate and put into practice within the school community the principles of reduce, reuse, recycle
- Enhance and broaden school-based recycling and organics programs
- Examine and audit the waste collected to reduce and re-educate where necessary.
- Embedding sustainable actions/accountability into purchasing protocols.
- Refusing to use unsustainable products such as plastic bags.
- Refusing products that are highly or individually packaged should also be refused.
- Reducing paper usage/photocopying in the classroom by looking at pedagogical approaches such as digital technologies which reduce our reliance on paper.
- Implementing nude food days to reduce the amount of lunch box waste across the school.
- Exploring methods of correspondence to families which use digital technologies, doing away with the need for large levels of photocopying,
- Minimising school litter through student's education, rules and procedures.
- Purchasing re-usable resources rather that replaceable items.
- Reusing packaging materials for art and craft based activities.
- Streaming classroom paper waste into recycle bins.
- Paper use is monitored via the papercut notification system.
- Streaming lunch area and staffroom waste into the colour coded systems for collection
- Deploying and maintaining organics programs such as compost and worm-farming to manage organic lunch waste on site.
- Encourage students to reduce their consumption of plastic wrapped snacks in preference for biodegradable/compostable snack packaging.
- Outdated or unwanted equipment will be offered to others who might have a use for it via the P&F or other charities.
- Unwanted uniforms will be collected and sold or given to children.
- All members of the school community should be involved in helping to prevent and clear litter from the school grounds.
- Students should regard litter clearing as a positive environmental action, which will also foster a sense of personal pride and responsibility in students.

Water

- Educate the school community about ways to reduce water usage
- Monitor water usage where practical
- Aim to ensure water efficient equipment is used throughout the school and is considered when conducting maintenance work.
- Consider the water consumption rating of appliances such as dishwashers when making purchasing decisions.
- Explore the use of underground drip feeding for plants and gardens.
- Planting native trees and drought-tolerant plants and shrubs to minimize irrigation.
- Educating children about sustainable water use practices in relation to hand washing and art/paint clean up.

Energy

- Aim to ensure energy efficient equipment is used throughout the school, including lighting
- Control energy consumption to reduce the impact of the natural environment
- Educate the school community about best practice use of energy
- Using passive heating and cooling technology such as building design and natural ventilation before opting for electronic cooling such as fans and air-conditioning
- Purchasing only energy efficient appliances.
- Turning off lights, fan and other appliances when not in use.
- Operating dishwashers only when full.
- The school will raise awareness about the impact transport has on the environment and people's health.
- Encourage students and staff to commute to school using environmentally friendly methods.
- Make all members of the school community aware of the link between energy use and financial cost.

Catholic Identity and Sustainability

Pope Francis reminds us: Creation is a gift, it is a wonderful gift that God has given us, so that we care for it and we use it for the benefit of all, always with great respect and gratitude (Pope Francis' Audience, 21 May 2014). This gift is acknowledged not only by the awe and wonder in children's faces as they experience nature, but in the care and actions of all those showing great respect for the whole of creation. As agents of the mission of the Church, Catholic education encourages and empowers school students and their communities to take action towards sustainability for the common good. The sustainable practises at **St. Mary's are guided by Pope Francis Encyclical letter Laudato Si' in which he highlights the follow points.**

- The Earth as God's Creation as a gift to us.
- Stewardship as a call to serve - God intended humans to have a respectful, holistic and loving relationship with the Earth.

- Sustainability as justice – we are asked to examine closely the consequences of our relationship with nature, to cooperate in this great unfolding of the universe by respecting the processes of the natural world, ensuring that the benefits are equitably distributed.
- Indigenous spirituality – understanding that the partnership or shared responsibility we have for caring for the environment crosses cultural and religious boundaries.

Implementation Issues

To ensure the effective implementation of this policy, under the direction of the Principal, St. Mary's Catholic Primary School will:

- Have a long term rather than a short term view of environmental sustainability
- Assign and monitor roles and responsibilities of implementation
- Maintain a "Care for Common Home Committee" at the school to effect the implementation of this policy
- Address the Australian Curriculum's cross curricular priorities (sustainability)
- Access grants where possible to assist with the implementation of this policy
- Consider cost effectiveness.
- Raise awareness to the local community about key environmental issues and by doing so encourage them to take an active role in environmental projects.
- Develop relationships with external organisations to promote environmentally friendly behaviour both within and outside the school.
- Acknowledge key resources and programs with connections to the Rockhampton Regional Council, membership with Catholic Earthcare Assisi Program and reference to Pope Francis' Laudato Si': On Care for our Common Home.

Reflection Material

- Laudato Si' 2015
- Care for Common Home Committee 2023
- Stewardship of the Earth - Catholic Identity Professional Development and Resources
- Co-Creators and Stewards of God's Creation - Together at One Altar