



ENROLMENT POLICY

FEBRUARY 2017

1. PURPOSE

This enrolment policy aims to:

- i. Set direction for school procedures and practices for enrolling students into St Patrick's Primary School.
- ii. Establish a common, consistent approach in enrolment practices.
- iii. Assist St Patrick's School to:
 - a. Cater for the needs of each child equitably within the constraints of the available teaching and material resources.
 - b. Encourage parents enrolling their children at St Patrick's to give support to parish and school life, especially in education in faith.

2. POLICY STATEMENT

St Patrick's Primary School is centred on the person of Jesus Christ and is called to live and proclaim the message of the Gospel. Staff, students and their families are encouraged into a personal relationship with Jesus, and are challenged to find, through Jesus, meaning and value in their lives. St Patrick's is an integral part of our parish's program of outreach to Catholic families. Enrolment at St Patrick's enables us to offer support to parents in the faith education of their children. In addition, St Patrick's contributes significantly to both our local community and the Australian community by promoting quality education and a just and tolerant society.

3. SCOPE

This policy applies to all students, staff members, volunteers and visitors to the site at St Patrick's.

4. GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- i. It is recognised that some families have had little contact with the Church and little experience of Catholic discipleship. Enrolment allows for the evangelisation of families and a deepening of faith and involvement in Church life.
- ii. Enrolment at St Patrick's "is open to all who want to share its educational goal inspired by Christian principles" (Congregatio de Institutione Catholica, 2009). Most importantly, there is a special place at St Patrick's for those with the greatest need, and every effort should be made to encourage their enrolment.
- iii. St Patrick's has a special care and responsibility for the children of Catholic families. We are also challenged to take the Good News of Jesus to all who are open to it.

5. RESPONSIBILITIES

- i. The **parish priest**, in collaboration with the principal:
 - a. Communicates the commencement of the enrolment period in parish bulletins.
 - b. Positively links the school with its parish community.
 - c. Reviews applications for enrolment with the principal where required.
 - d. Encourages the active involvement of new families in the parish community.
 - e. Encourages Catholic families living in the parish to consider enrolment in the school.
- ii. The **principal**, in collaboration with the parish priest:
 - a. Seeks to develop a fruitful relationship between the parish community and the school community and those families seeking enrolment.
 - b. Ensures that the school has practices and processes that reflect the rationale of this enrolment policy.
 - c. Positively discriminates in favour of those whose need is the greatest.
 - d. Gives parents clear information about enrolment at St Patrick's.
 - e. Ensures that the implementation of the enrolment policy is exercised in a just and compassionate manner.

- f. Advises school personnel of the rationale and values that underpin decisions about enrolment.
 - g. Responds to any concerns from families in enrolment matters.
 - h. Ensures that no student is refused enrolment because of the inability (as distinct from an unwillingness) of a parent/guardian to meet financial requirements.
 - i. Employs strategies for communicating with the broader community, including Catholic families, about school enrolment policy and processes.
 - j. Consults with the Catholic Schools Office on matters requiring clarification in regard to enrolment.
 - k. Ensures that confidentiality and privacy guidelines are followed.
 - l. Communicates with a student's previous school if required.
- iii. **Parents and guardians** enrolling their children at St Patrick's have a responsibility to:
- a. Respect and agree to support Catholic ideals, principles and practices.
 - b. Acknowledge the importance of religious education for their children.
 - c. Commit themselves to the parish community which works towards the education, formation and pastoral care of young people.
 - d. Complete and return the official enrolment form. (Such action, however, does not guarantee enrolment in the school).
 - e. Abide by the provisions specified in the enrolment form.
 - f. Recognise and be prepared to meet their financial responsibilities for the ongoing enrolment of the child.
 - g. Disclose any special educational needs of the prospective student.
 - h. Disclose any particular medical, social and/or emotional conditions - as well as health care requirements - of the prospective student, and allow for communication with relevant medical personnel if required.
 - i. Advise the principal of any court orders that may exist in regard to the child, and provide a certified copy of the court order(s) for the child's school file.
 - j. Provide the necessary visa documentation relating to an overseas student enrolment.

6. **BUDGET**

The school will devote a proportion of its budget to the provision of funds for professional development to support the staff in relation to this policy.

7. **NEXT REVIEW DATE**

This policy will be reviewed in 2020 in consultation with relevant staff.

8. **DEFINITIONS**

- i. Catholic families are defined as families in which at least one parent/guardian is a Catholic.
- ii. "Those with the greatest need" may include those students who are socially, financially, emotionally and/or spiritually disadvantaged and/or at the margins of society.
- iii. Enrolment panel: An advisory committee which includes the school principal (or their nominee) and the parish priest (or their nominee). At the discretion of the principal, panel membership may also be extended to any other member of the school staff.

9. **LEGISLATIVE / PROFESSIONAL GUIDELINES**

Enrolment Policy, Catholic Schools Office, Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle, 2013.

APPENDIX 1: ORDER OF ENROLMENT PROCEDURES

1. The enrolment period is advertised as being open.
2. The parents contact the school requesting an enrolment package, which includes an application for enrolment form and a Catholic Schools Office information package. Detailed enrolment information and forms are also available on the Catholic Schools Office website at www.mn.catholic.edu.au.
3. A new application for enrolment must be completed for enrolment into Kindergarten and when transitioning from Year 6 to Year 7.
4. Parents who make application for enrolment for their child/children are invited for an interview with the principal or nominee. During this interview the following issues are discussed:
 - i. The ethos of the Catholic school.
 - ii. The schools relationship to the parish.
 - iii. The primacy of the parents as their child's educators and their relationship to the school.
 - iv. Particular characteristics or needs of the child.
 - v. The financial arrangements necessary to maintain a Catholic school.
 - vi. The parents' ability to meet financial obligations and, where this needs to be varied, discussions as to any variation.
 - v. Parent acceptance of an enrolment offer involves a serious commitment and explicit acceptance in respect of the ethos of the Catholic school as the environment in which their child will be educated.
5. In regard to Kindergarten enrolments for the following academic year, a non-refundable fee of \$100.00 is required on acceptance of an enrolment offer. This fee is deducted from that child's school fees for the following year.
6. If there are more applications for Kindergarten than there are places available, the principal, in consultation with the parish priest, will list applications in order of priority.
7. Successful applicants will be contacted and offered a place in the appropriate class. Unsuccessful applicants will be notified in writing. Students may also be placed on a waiting list. Any formalised waiting list is to be prioritised and procedurally fair. Appeals against the decision shall be made firstly to the principal, then to the appropriate Assistant Director at the Catholic Schools Office.
8. In some circumstances it may be necessary to put some applications 'on hold' pending finalisation of late (Catholic) arrivals. Those concerned should be advised of the situation and the time when they may expect a definite answer. The advice of the Catholic Schools Office may need to be sought in some circumstances.
9. There are three orientation sessions each year for those children who have enrolled to begin Kindergarten at St Patrick's in the following year: one in Term 3 and two in Term 4.
 - i. The Term 3 orientation morning is a "pop-up playgroup" at which the children interact with one another in a structured but informal setting. The parents normally stay for this session and meet with one another over a cup of tea.
 - ii. At the first Term 4 orientation morning, the children spend time in a classroom. At this time, parents/guardians gather in another part of the school to listen to a number of speakers who address topics relevant to the transition of the children to St Patrick's.
 - iii. The second Term 4 orientation morning is a transition morning at which the children spend more time in the classroom. The parents/guardians leave the school and collect the children at the end of the morning session.
 - iv. Extra orientation sessions may be scheduled for children with particular learning support needs who would benefit from extra transition to school.

APPENDIX 2: ENROLMENT CATEGORIES

1. **Kindergarten enrolments**
 - i. By law, all children must be enrolled in school by their sixth birthday.
 - ii. To be eligible for Kindergarten enrolment at St Patrick's, a child must celebrate their fifth birthday on or before 31st May of the year in which their parents seek enrolment for them. This varies from NSW government advice which states that the minimum starting age for a child to be enrolled in a NSW school is four years and six months, i.e. a child must turn five by 31st July in the year of starting school.
2. **Early age in Kindergarten**

- i. The enrolment of children in Kindergarten who are under the minimum starting age is not recommended.
 - ii. If the principal agrees to enrolling a child under the minimum age, the approval of the designated Assistant Director is required before enrolment can occur. Supporting documentation from appropriate health or educational professionals detailing substantive reasons for early school entry must be attached to the application, as well as a letter from the parent(s) requesting an exemption from the policy. It is the responsibility of the parent/caregiver to provide all appropriate documentation to the principal.
 - iii. Approval for early age enrolment will only be granted in exceptional circumstances.
3. **Early age in Years 1 to 6**
- i. The principal has the discretion to process an early age enrolment in Years 1 to 6 only if special circumstances exist.
 - ii. Parents will be informed by the principal or delegate that the school will assess the child's readiness and learning after consultation with the Catholic Schools Office Senior Education Officer (Student Support) at the time of the enrolment application.
 - iii. For individual cases in which it is believed that the readiness of a child would warrant his or her enrolment at an earlier age than usual, the principal will consult with the Senior Education Officer (Student Support) to arrange for an individual assessment of the child's readiness and learning needs.
 - iv. Before agreeing to the early enrolment of a student, the principal must seek written approval from the Assistant Director.
4. **Students with disabilities**
- i. If the school has adequate facilities and resources, no child will be denied Catholic schooling at St Patrick's because of a disability. A Student Support Officer from the Catholic Schools Office will be contacted for advice during consideration of an enrolment application for students with special needs.
 - ii. The principal will refer to the Enrolment Guidelines and Transition for Students with a Disability. (See Appendix 10).
 - iii. A Student Support Officer (Catholic Schools Office Student Services) must be contacted for advice during consideration of an enrolment application for a student with disabilities.
5. **Overseas students**
- i. Given the current complex regulations which govern the conditions under which students holding visas may seek enrolment into Australian schools, the principal must refer all applications to the Assistant Director. Enrolments will not be approved until this is done.
 - ii. In making such referrals, the principal must sight the applicant's passport and visa, and forward the Assistant Director a copy of each of these documents, identifying the visa status of the student concerned. The time period specified on a visa is critical, and if the student is successfully enrolled the expiry date needs to be tagged on the school administrative system. When this period expires the student may no longer be eligible for education and/or State and Commonwealth recurrent funding. If a student's visa expires the principal should immediately contact the Assistant Director.
 - iii. A student who holds a Student visa (571 visa subclass) cannot be offered education in a Maitland-Newcastle Diocesan school. These students are not eligible for State or Commonwealth recurrent funding and are liable for local fees, for the recovery of the government per capita grant subsidy, and for ESL tuition that may be required. Students holding this visa subclass come to Australia expressly to access education and not due to family relocation.
 - iv. The principal may not give a guarantee that a student holding a visa will be enrolled following their taking up residence in Australia.
6. **Students with a history of violence**
- i. The principal has a responsibility to assess and manage any risk of harm to its staff and students. Section 5A of the NSW Education Act places responsibility on principals to ascertain whether there is anything in a student's history or circumstances which might pose a risk to the student, other students or staff.

- ii. If there are reasonable grounds to suspect that the student has a history of behaviour that gives rise to a risk at school, the principal should forward to the previous school the "Request for student background information and documents" form. (See Appendix 2). "Reasonable grounds" may include, among other things:
 - a. Responses provided on the application form.
 - b. Information provided by the parents and/or student in discussion with the principal.
 - c. Information provided by reputable sources such as previous principals and school counsellors, staff with previous experience of the student, or staff of other government agencies with first-hand knowledge of the student. From the information provided, the principal must ascertain whether a risk assessment is needed.

7. **Conditional enrolment**

The principal may, in discussion with the student, parents, parish priest, staff and CSO personnel, enrol a student on a conditional basis in light of the student's particular situation and/or needs at the time of or during the student's enrolment.

APPENDIX 3: EXEMPTION FROM ENROLMENT AT SCHOOL

1. By law, all children must be enrolled in school by their sixth birthday. In the case of parents of children of compulsory school age seeking authority not to enrol, this must be considered as an application for exemption from school enrolment. Certificates of Exemption from the compulsory education requirements of Section 25 of the Education Act 1990 may be granted by the Director of Schools when it has been clearly demonstrated by the applicant that an exemption is in the student's best interests in the short and long term and that alternatives to exemption have been considered. For further information refer to the Guidelines for Exemption from Attendance at NSW Catholic Systemic Schools.
2. Diocesan Directors may grant such exemptions due to:
 - i. Age, where a child turns six years on or after 1 October or later in a school year and is engaged in either:
 - a. Full-time preschool education at an accredited preschool for the remainder of that school year, or;
 - b. A full-time or part-time accredited preschool program for students with disabilities, leading to enrolment and full-time attendance at a government or registered non-government school not later than six months after the child's sixth birthday.
 - ii. The health or disability of a child necessitating the continuation of an individual program that is supported by medical specialists not longer than six months after the child's sixth birthday.

APPENDIX 4: ENROLMENT PRIORITIES

1. The principal has a responsibility to ensure that the Catholic identity of the school is maintained and promoted by giving priority in enrolment to students who are baptised Catholics. The school may also enrol students from other faith traditions whose families demonstrate that they share in the expressed values of the school. If there are more enrolment applications than there are places available in the school, the following priorities will be adopted:
 - i. Catholic families of the parish who are known and involved members of the parish.
 - ii. Catholic families of other parishes who are known and involved members of their own parish but who have particular needs, which can be best met in this school.
 - iii. Catholic families of the parish who participate irregularly in the life and worship of the parish.
 - iv. Families committed to a Christian denomination who want a Catholic education and who currently have or have had children within the Catholic system and were totally supportive of the school.
 - v. Catholic families who do not participate in parish life.
 - vi. Families of other Christian denominations who want a religious education for their children and who regularly participate in their own denominational life.
 - vii. Families who nominally belong to other religious denominations and who are open to the possibilities offered by a Catholic school.

- viii. Families who have no religious affiliation but who are open to the possibilities offered by a Catholic school.
2. 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.

APPENDIX 5: BASIS FOR DISCRETION

Local pastoral discretion is an important element of decision-making with regard to enrolment at St Patrick's. Therefore, while bearing in mind that their first priority is to Catholic parents, the parish priest and principal can exercise some flexibility in enrolment decisions where pastoral discretion may be deemed necessary. Discretionary decisions could include:

- i. In cases of poverty, disability or special needs, a child may, and if possible should, be given a higher position in the priorities listed than would otherwise apply.
- ii. Parents' intentions regarding their own and their children's search for education in the faith.
- iii. Family situations requiring compassion or a special pastoral approach.
- iv. Family circumstances involving family relocation.
- v. Students who have not been able to access a Catholic school previously because of location.

APPENDIX 6: COOPERATION BETWEEN SCHOOLS

1. St Patrick's is part of a system of schools whose members work in cooperation for the common good of all, and who recognise that enrolment choices can impact on other schools. The principal will consult with the principal of another diocesan Catholic school when considering an enrolment application from a family that is currently attending a Catholic school outside the parish served by the school. The principal will give particular consideration to the pastoral needs of the family and the potential impact on enrolment patterns across the Catholic system.
2. The principal will inform parents that consultation will occur between schools with regard to transfer applications. It is recommended that parents inform the principal of their school of origin of their intention to seek alternative placement.

APPENDIX 7: TRANSFER BETWEEN SCHOOLS

1. Any acceptance of a student transfer will occur only after consultation between respective schools.
2. On accepting enrolment from another diocesan Catholic school, the principal will seek information and copies of student documentation from the student's previous school.

APPENDIX 8: ENROLMENT GENERATED STRUCTURAL CHANGES

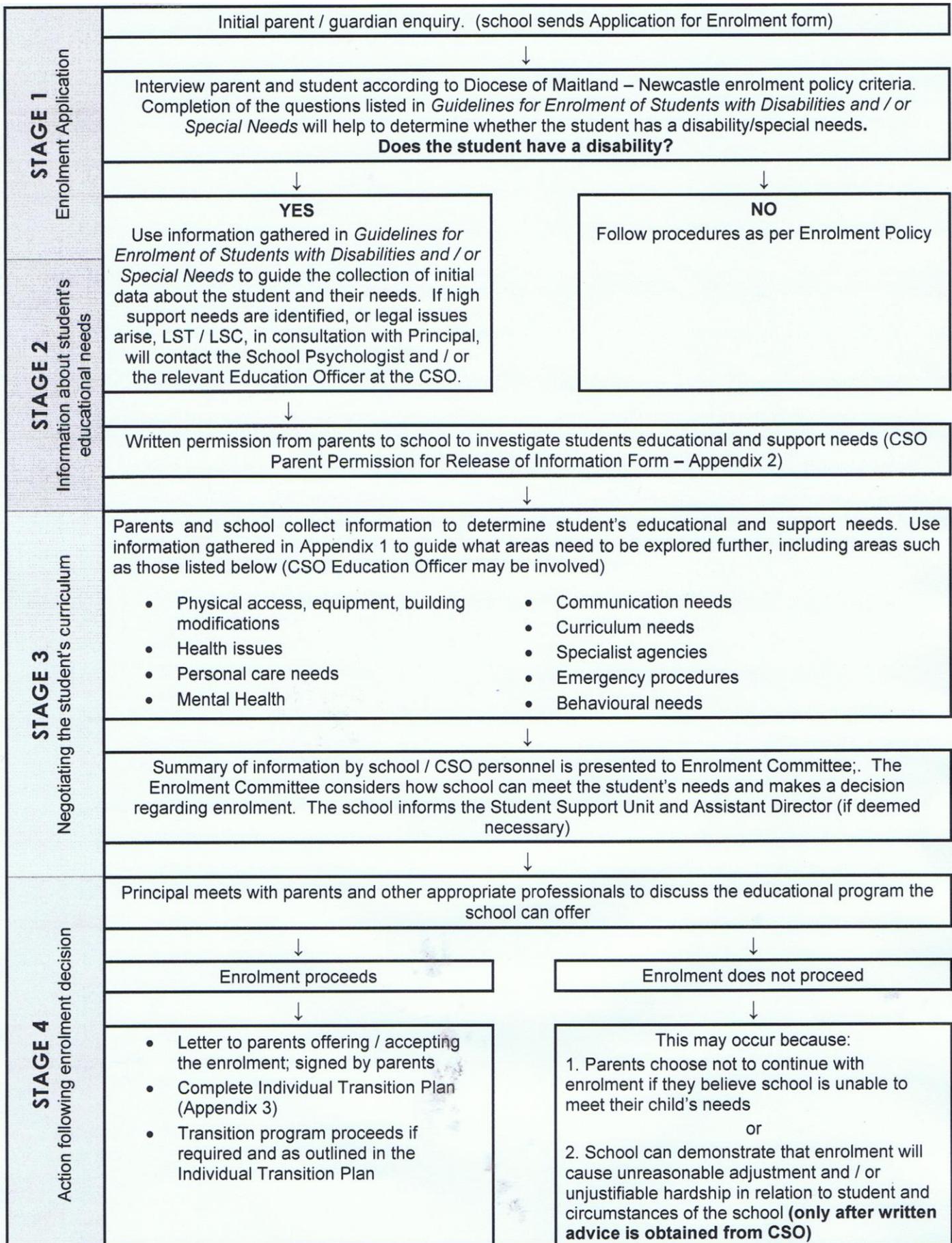
If a significant change in enrolment patterns is likely to affect the current structure of the school and/or delivery of educational programs, the principal must discuss this change with the Assistant Director. A significant change would include:

- i. An increase in enrolments that would impact on the enrolments of other Catholic schools.
- ii. An increase in enrolments that would require capital development to accommodate the change.
- iii. A significant decrease in the number of Catholic enrolments.

APPENDIX 9: APPEALS AND DISPUTES ABOUT ENROLMENT DECISIONS

1. An appeal against a decision shall be made firstly to the principal, then to the appropriate Assistant Director at the Catholic Schools Office.
2. Procedures and processes in the Complaints Management Policy will be followed.

APPENDIX 10: ENROLMENT GUIDELINES AND TRANSITION FOR STUDENTS WITH A DISABILITY



APPENDIX 11: URGENT REQUEST FOR STUDENT BACKGROUND INFORMATION AND DOCUMENTS



CONFIDENTIAL

To be completed by the Principal of the school at which the student is seeking to enrol

From the Principal: _____

To the Principal: _____

Dear Colleague,

The student whose name and date of birth appear below has sought to enrol at this school.

Student's name: _____

Date of birth: _____ Sex: Male Female

To assist us to conduct a risk assessment in the context of enrolment, I would appreciate all relevant and available information about the student's behaviour and disciplinary history and would be obliged if you would arrange for that information to be forwarded to me. This should include the student's enrolment details, risk assessments undertaken relating to the student, behaviour management or disciplinary processes undertaken with the school, any reports of concerns raised by classroom teachers, notes of the student welfare committee etc.

If there are particular aspects of this student's behaviour of which I should be aware, please call me directly on telephone number

Direct Number: _____ Fax Return: _____

To be completed by the Principal of the student's former school.

Please indicate in each of the boxes **Y**(yes) or **N** (no) or **O** if unsure

To be managed at school this student required behaviour support. Please forward a copy of the relevant program.

This student has a documented history of violence or use of illicit drugs or legal drugs in a manner not prescribed or use of alcohol.

This student was suspended/expelled for violence, threats of violence or possession on school premises of a weapon or implement used or intended to cause harm

Information on this student, including details of any safety concerns, will be posted to you in an envelope marked *Personal and Confidential* by

_____/_____/_____

Confidentiality Warning

The confidentiality of the information contained in this message is protected and is intended for the principal named above. If you are not the named recipient you must not copy, distribute, take any action reliant on or disclose any details in this message to any other person or organisation. Unauthorised disclosure or misuse of the confidential information obtained as a result of mistaken transmission may incur a liability for criminal penalty. Please notify the sender if you have received this message in error.

Please respond by return email