

Choosing a Catholic School for Your Child

A Booklet for Parents and Carers
of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Students



CCSP

Council of Catholic School Parents NSW/ACT

“ Parents choose Catholic Schools for lots of different reasons.

Here's what they say...

“I chose a Catholic school for my children because they really wanted the whole family involved - not just the kids.”

“I sent my kids to a Catholic school because my family went there and we want the same values for our children.”

“I chose the Catholic school because of the pastoral care and the high expectations for my children from the school.”

“I chose the Catholic school in my town because of the programs it offered Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.”

“We chose a Catholic school because they came to our pre-school regularly and my daughter got to know the Kindergarten teacher and the Aboriginal Education Assistant.”

“I chose the Catholic High School for my son because my cousin told me they had a very good approach to discipline and the structure was good for her son.”

Artwork by Sue Daley
Booklet Produced By:

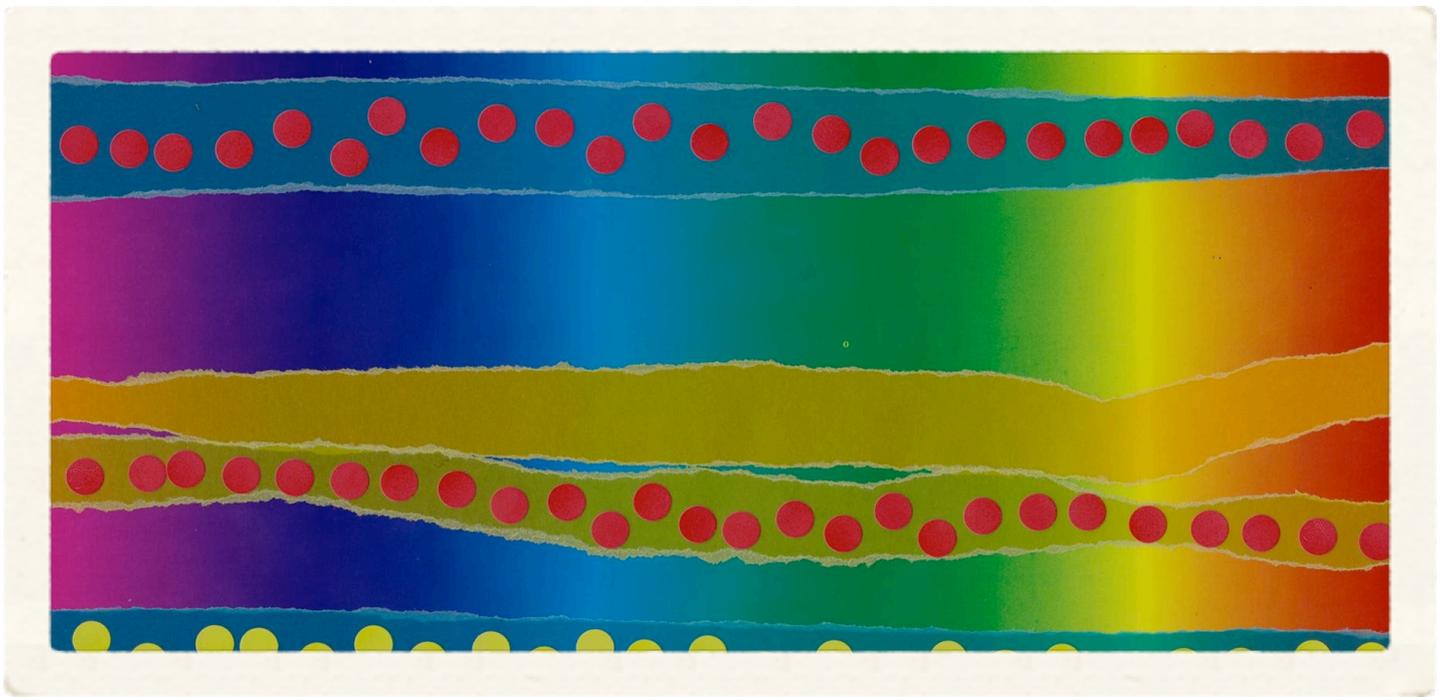


Council of
Catholic School Parents



CCSP NSW/ACT * E: office@ccsp.catholic.edu.au * Ph: (02) 9390 5338

W: www.ccsp.catholic.edu.au * W: www.partners4learning.edu.au * P: PO Box A960, Sydney South NSW 1235



Welcome

This booklet has been written for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parents, families and carers who may be thinking about choosing a Catholic school for their children. It is also a useful booklet for those families who already have children in Catholic schools.

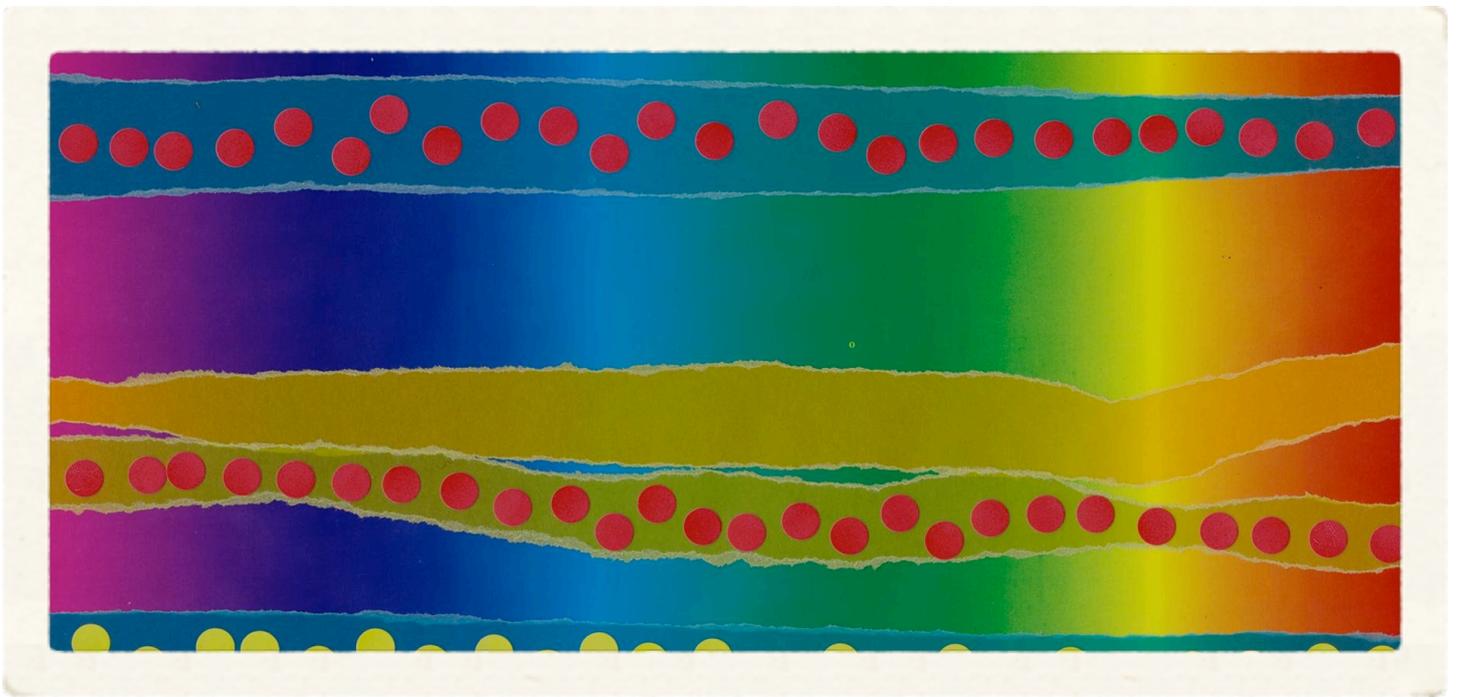
Welcome from the NSW/ACT Catholic Schools Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Parent Committee! We come from different communities from all over NSW and ACT. We are grandparents, mums, dads, aunts and uncles and we have children in Catholic schools. We are proud to represent the families of almost 5000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in Catholic schools in NSW/ACT.

We hope this booklet will help answer some of the questions you may have, like:

- What is a Catholic School?
- Who can attend?
- How do I enrol?
- What about uniforms and fees?
- What if my child has special needs?
- How can I be involved in the school?

It will also offer some tips on:

- Boarding Schools
- Things to do with your child to help them at school
- Resources and Links



What is a Catholic School?

Catholic schools are learning communities where the unique dignity of each and every child (and parents, families, carers and staff) is respected and valued. Catholic schools strive to be spiritual, respectful and sharing places. Catholic schools see education as a partnership between parents, families and communities and the school.

For over 180 years parents and families have entrusted their children to Catholic schools, confident that they would be receiving a distinctive education with an emphasis on children's academic and spiritual growth.

There are over 580 Catholic schools in NSW educating over 239 000 children. Mostly, Catholic schools are part of a local 'system' of schools. There are, however, 46 Catholic Independent schools including several 'specialist schools', run by religious orders such as the Marist Brothers or the Sisters of the Good Samaritan. The specialist schools are for children with various special needs ranging from learning and physical disabilities to behavioural needs.

There are almost 5000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in Catholic schools in NSW and ACT.

- Like all schools, Catholic schools are accountable to governments and their local communities for meeting all the teaching and learning requirements of the NSW and Federal governments.
- Catholic schools teach the same curriculum as state government schools and also aim to develop students' spiritual understanding and awareness through religious education and social justice activities.
- Catholic schools aim to share Catholic beliefs, values, practices and traditions within a faith-filled community of students, teachers and families.
- Catholic schools respect and celebrate diversity.

Who Can Attend a Catholic School?

Everyone is welcome at a Catholic school. Enrolment, however, depends on places being available. When you decide to send your child to a Catholic school you are also saying that you will support the school and its values.

Enrolment policies can be slightly different depending on where you live, generally however the enrolment period for systemic schools begins around March and/or May each year for the following year. Dates for Independent Catholic schools vary.

Even if you think you may have missed the enrolment period it is still worthwhile approaching the school to see if any places are available.

You can get an enrolment form by ringing the school, by going to the school office or by downloading it from the school website. If you have friends or relatives at the school, you could ask them to pick up a form for you.

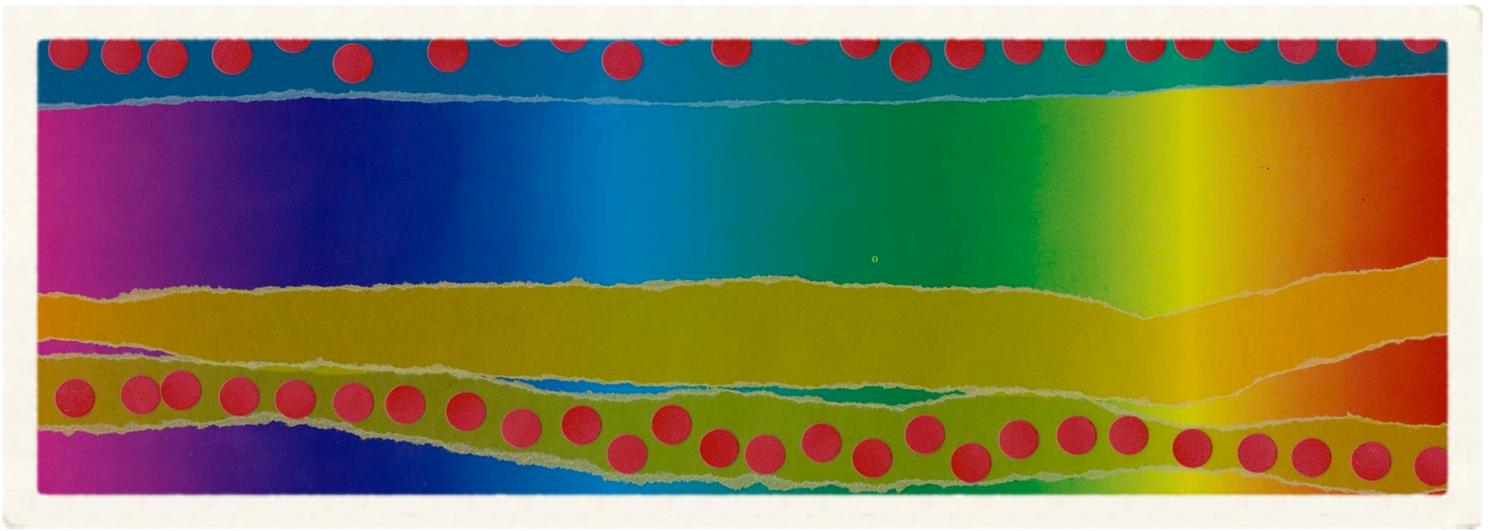
As part of the enrolment process you will usually have an interview with the Principal and may be asked to bring along documents like your child's birth certificate, immunisation records, baptismal certificate and sometimes academic records (for older children). Some of these documents are required by law (for example the birth certificate) and others, like past academic records, are needed so that the school can understand your child's needs and interests and identify how the school can best support your child. It's good to be up-front about any difficulties or particular talents your child may have during these meetings.

While any family who is prepared to support the Catholic values of the school is welcome, priority is usually given to Catholic families at enrolment time.



"I send my daughters to a Catholic school because I know that they are receiving the best education and the school values and respects our Aboriginal culture.

We believe that the Catholic school is the best option for our children because it embraces their spirituality and the school welcomes the community to be involved in many ways".



What about Fees & Uniforms?

Even if you think you can't afford the fees you are still welcome at a Catholic school.

Catholic schools charge fees to cover the gap between what it costs to run the school and what governments provide through funding. These fees are kept to a minimum. Independent Catholic schools charge higher fees as they receive less government funding. If you have more than one child attending a Catholic school, the second and further children may receive fee discounts. You may need to discuss this with the school.

Generally there are four types of fees parents are charged:

- Tuition fees
- Resource fees
- Building &/or Parish levy
- Excursion fees

Amounts will vary depending on the school and the age group of your child, for example high school fees are generally higher than primary school fees. High schools sometimes have other fees and charges in addition to those above such as subject fees. Some high schools also offer laptop programs where individual student laptops can be leased or purchased.

Uniforms

All schools have their own uniform requirements. To keep costs down, many schools have a 'clothing pool' with new and pre-loved items. Your child's school can also tell you which shops stock the school's uniform.

Financial Assistance

The Federal government provides assistance through Abstudy. Scholarships are also available through some schools, some dioceses and the federal government. If you need additional help please contact the Principal, Aboriginal Education Worker or Diocesan Aboriginal Education Advisor to make an appointment to discuss what might be available.

Please don't be worried about discussing financial assistance with fees and uniforms with the Principal, Parish Priest or Aboriginal Education Advisor - they are there to help and will always protect your privacy. Remember, fees should not be a barrier to you choosing a Catholic school.

My Child Has Special Needs...

Open and supportive relationships between the adults in your child's life (such as you and your child's teacher) are critical to school success. Good relationships are even more important if your child has additional or special needs.

You will need to collaborate closely with the school on the best form of care and support for your child - both you and the school are responsible for the success of those arrangements. This may mean working with your child at home to support their learning and development and meeting regularly with your child's teachers.

Disabilities and special needs

If your child has a disability or other special need please make an appointment to talk with the Principal as early as possible. The school can then advise you about what they can offer your child and, if able, make suitable arrangements for your child.

When seeking enrolment, as the parent or carer it is your responsibility to provide information about your child's disabilities and/or needs and to provide this information and any supporting documents to the school as quickly as possible. Remember— the more open and honest you are at the beginning, the better the school can assist you and your child.

Gifted and Talented

Gifted and talented children have above average potential in one or more areas of intellectual, creative, social or physical ability or in one or more areas of human performance e.g. music, sport or dance. Sometimes children will benefit from other programs such as acceleration, extension work, differentiated tasks or enrichment activities. It is important to contact your local school to talk with the Principal about how the school can support your child and about any special programs offered.



"Parents and teachers working together = great things for kids".

How Can I Be Involved?

Parents are the first teachers of their children.

You have a right to know and to understand the decisions that affect your child. You also have a responsibility to support the school in your child's learning and development.

Parents are encouraged to be involved in the school in a number of ways:

School Boards

Members are generally elected by the school community each year and meet regularly during the year. Not all schools, however, have school boards.

Parents & Friends Associations

All parents and carers are members of the P&F Association and all parents are welcome to attend meetings. The best P&Fs are those that reflect the make-up of the community the school supports—so get involved! P&Fs can have a variety of names and are sometimes just known as the parent association.

PaCE Committees

The Federal Government's PaCE Program supports Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and communities to 'reach-in' to schools and to develop partnerships with them. The aim is the development and implementation of creative and innovative approaches to improve the educational outcomes of students through the building of parental and community engagement with schools and other education providers.

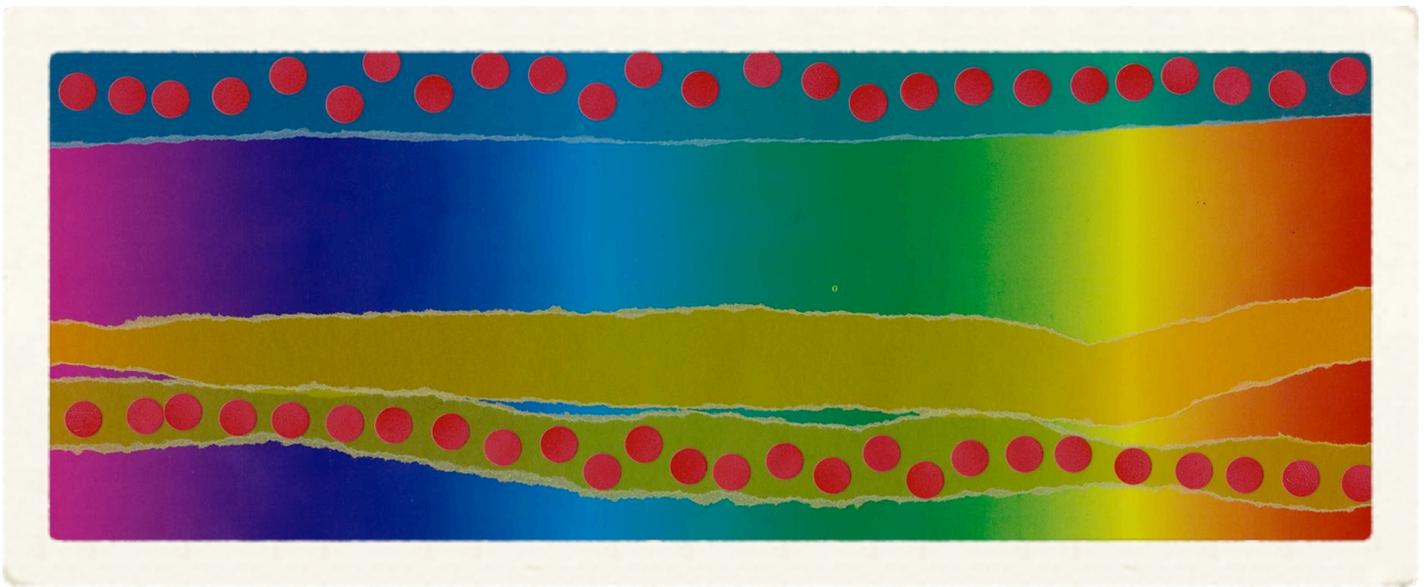
PaCE committees develop and monitor local projects within their school.

If there isn't a committee in the school that meets the needs of Aboriginal parents and families, maybe you could **start a new committee with the Principal** to look at ways to celebrate culture and parent and community involvement eg start a NAIDOC Committee.

There are also opportunities to get involved at the **Diocesan (regional) and State level** through diocesan Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Educational Advisory Committees, parent associations and bodies such as the NSW Catholic Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Parent Committee and the Council of Catholic School Parents.



Although Shanise was the only Indigenous Student in her year, she was really happy with the amount of support she received from the school. She had numerous opportunities to attend events on behalf of the school, as well as speaking on behalf of the Indigenous students at community events. She really loved the cultural and spiritual content of the religion lessons.



How Can I Help My Child?

Research shows that children do better at school and in life when their parents are involved in their education.

Being 'involved' doesn't only mean at school.

Just because your child is at school doesn't mean that your role as their first teacher is over. As parents, carers and community members your role is now as important as ever. We know that kids who have families and adults in their life who are interested and involved in their learning, do better at school, stay at school longer, like school more and are better behaved.

What can you do at school?

- Get to know the teachers—make an appointment to meet and ask how you can help your child at home
- Volunteer to assist at the sports carnival or other school activities
- Offer classroom support
- Offer the school your talents—artistic, musical, trade or professional

How can I be involved in my children's learning at home?

- Ask your child how they think school is going
- Talk about their day— what they did, who they played with, what songs they sang or what they are learning about
- Check your children's homework or ask them to explain what they are doing—get them to teach you something!
- Talk to other parents
- Read to your children or have them read to you—even your teenagers!
- Listen to your children—their stories, news, concerns
- Make everyday things (like shopping, cooking and watching TV) learning opportunities. For example, seek their views and opinions about what they are watching on TV, ask them to calculate change at the shop, get them to guess the weight of the vegetables when cooking and so on.
- Tell your kids that you're proud of them everyday
- Have high expectations and aspirations for them (share these with your children and their teachers)
- Have fun with your children!

Catholic Boarding Schools

Boarding school is essential for some regional and remote children and can also be a wonderful opportunity for some 'city kids'.

Make the decision as a family— include your child in the decision.

Talk to families who have experienced it.

Families need to consider a number of things before they decide to send their child to boarding school:

- Will boarding school suit our family and our child? Keep in mind boarding is *not* for every child or every family!
- What opportunities will it give my child that they can't get locally?

Visit schools to find the one that best suits your child's interests, needs and talents. Make sure to ask:

- how the school celebrates culture
- how it can support your child's particular needs
- how the school supports families
- what orientation is available
- what scholarships and/or fee assistance is available
- if there is an AEW at the school
- what the school's policies/practices are in relation to discipline and allowing students to attend family functions such as funerals or cultural events

Catholic Boarding Schools - Sydney

St Ignatius College Riverview
Boys
Tambourine Bay Road, LANE COVE
Website: <http://www.riverview.nsw.edu.au/>

St Joseph's College
Boys
Mark Street, HUNTERS HILL
Website: <http://www.joeyes.org/>

St Gregory's College
Boys
100 Badgally Road, Campbelltown
Website: www.stgregs.nsw.edu.au

St Vincent's College
Girls
Rockwall Crescent Potts Point
Website: <http://www.stvincents.nsw.edu.au>

Kincoppal - Rose Bay
Girls
New South Head Road, ROSE BAY
Website: <http://www.krb.nsw.edu.au/>

Loreto Normanhurst
Girls
Pennant Hills Road, Normanhurst
Website: <http://www.loretonh.nsw.edu.au>

St Scholastica's College
Girls
4 Avenue Road Glebe
Website: <https://www.scholastica.nsw.edu.au>

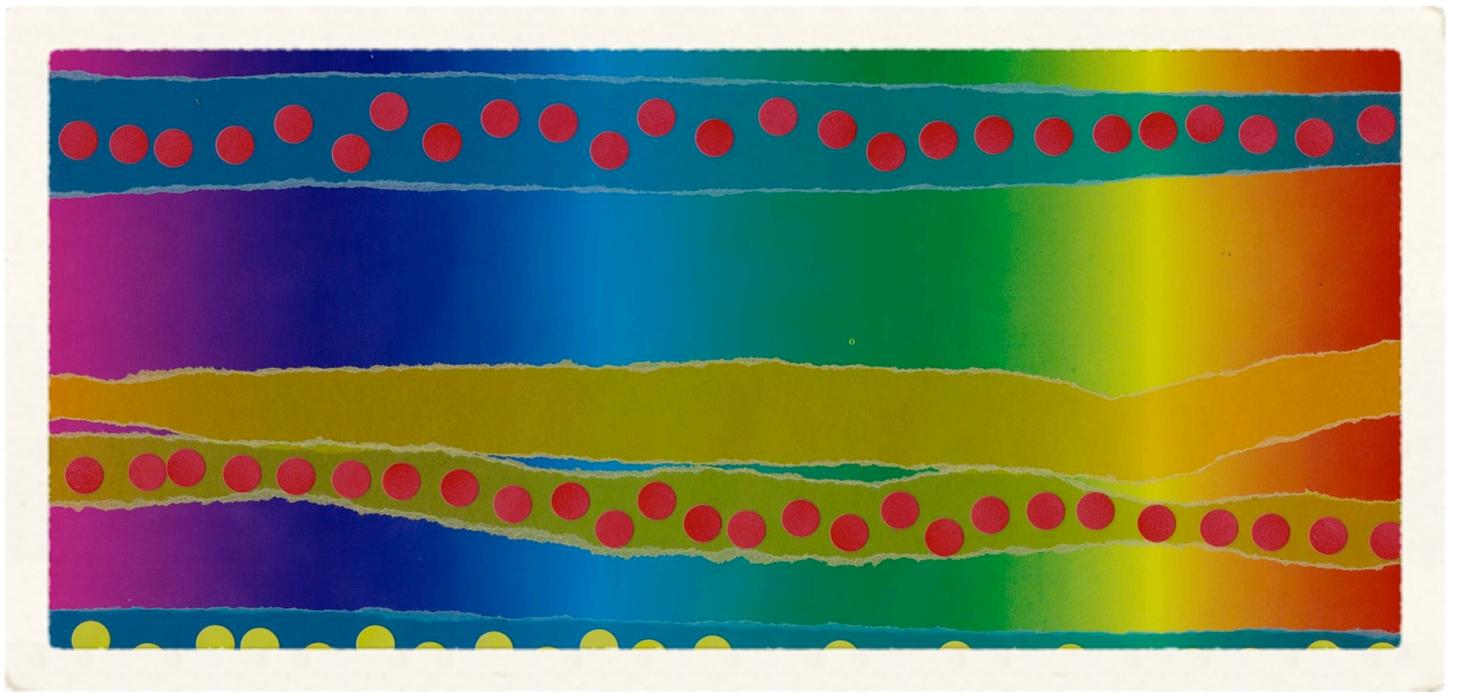
Catholic Boarding Schools - Rural

MacKillop College
Girls
Gormans Hill Road, Bathurst
Website: <http://mkc.nsw.edu.au>

Red Bend Catholic College
Boys and Girls
312, Forbes
Website: <http://www.redbendcc.nsw.edu.au/>

St Francis de Sales Regional College
Boys and Girls
Yanco Avenue, Leeton
Email: <http://web.sfcww.catholic.edu.au>

Kildare Catholic High School
Boys and Girls
Coleman Street, Wagga Wagga
Website: <http://www.kcc.wagga.catholic.edu.au/index.htm>



Resources

Australian Parenting:	www.raisingchildren.net.au
	www.kidscount.com.au
Federal Government:	www.deewr.gov.au
Vibe:	www.vibe.com.au
What Works:	www.whatworks.edu.au
Dare to Lead:	www.daretolead.edu.au
Indij Readers:	www.indijreaders.com.au
NSW Board of Studies:	www.boardofstudies.nsw.edu.au
NSW AECG:	www.nswaecg.com.au
Council of Catholic School Parents:	www.ccsp.catholic.edu.au
Catholic Education Commission (NSW):	www.cecnsw.catholic.edu.au
Find a Catholic School:	www.catholicschools.nsw.edu.au (Follow the links to the Catholic Education Office in your area)

Parenting is not an easy task. The good news is that there is free support available for all parents and carers across NSW. If you have any concerns about raising your children or about parenting all you need to do is pick up the phone.

Parent Line NSW is open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and is available for the cost of a local call from land lines.

Parent Line NSW 1300 1300 52

Parent Line is funded by the NSW Department of Community Services and managed by CatholicCare.



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