Introduction

'Catholic schools need to provide the best apprenticeship that they can in the Christian life.' (Mandate, para 59). Retreats are an integral part of the life-long faith formation of young people. They promote systematic, intentional catechesis as part of the comprehensive evangelisation of students.

Catholic school retreats are relational at heart. To be effective, retreat programs acknowledge the individual's unique reality and bring the power of the Gospel into contemporary culture in a way that engages and empowers young people.

The Catholic school retreat aims to put students in 'communion and intimacy with Jesus Christ' (GDC, 80). Through the retreat experience students come to know Christian love and are exposed to a Gospel centred way of life. Students hear the Gospel and are empowered to connect the Gospel message to their lives and to find ways of continuing the Church's mission. They participate in the life of the Christian community through liturgy and through activities which emphasise growth in Christian faith.

Definition

The term retreat refers to time away from the normal school program where participants have the opportunity to reflect on their relationship with God. The emphasis is on students' awareness of the presence of God in their lives. Retreats may vary in style and duration. They include experiences of prayer, discussions, reflective silence and quiet time alone. The celebration of the Sacraments of Reconciliation and Eucharist is strongly encouraged.

Principles

- Retreats aim to provide experiences for students to know, contemplate and celebrate Jesus.
- Retreats are an integral part of St Brigid's College. They are inclusive, purposeful, meaningful and take into account the culture, developmental needs and experiences of students.
- St Brigid's College Retreats, complement the catechesis experiences offered by the school.
- Retreat planning takes into consideration the charism, ethos and mission of St Brigid's College, a Mercy Ministry.
- Retreats are planned in a way that engages students in rich experiences of Catholic symbol and ritual.
- Retreat staff will be committed to the faith formation of young people.

Procedures

- External provider groups must be checked for a current Working with Children Check and National Police certificate. For groups who are not legally required to hold a Working with Children Check then risk mitigation measures must be put in place. This would require consultation with the Principal and any relevant CECWA and MEL representatives.
- External groups are required to have a current public liability insurance certificate of currency.
- External groups must have the correct qualifications/experience and or are an approved facilitator by CECWA.
- St Brigid's College Excursion/Incursion application has been completed with the risk management plan and approved prior to retreat.
- Parents and students shall be informed about the nature and purpose of the retreat and the level of student involvement required.
- The St Brigid's College Retreat Programme shall consider the religious and cultural backgrounds and the developmental needs of the students.
- Appropriate prayer and liturgical experiences will be included in the Retreat programme.
- Creative and engaging activities and approaches with young people which connect to systematic catechesis, will be provided.
- Staff involved in a retreat shall be familiar with the retreat programme and its expectations prior to and during the retreat.
- Staff are expected to fully participate in Retreat activities.
- The roles of retreat staff shall be clearly defined.
- The Year 7 to 12 retreat programme shall include appropriate evaluation procedures, including feedback from students. This is to be submitted to the CTL RE/Christian Ministries and the College Principal.
- External groups that provide retreat experiences for Catholic schools are to be provided with copies of this policy and are required to follow it.

Review History

Version	Date Released	Next Review	Author	Approved
1.0	2016	2018		SLT
2.0	2020			