

# **Boston Archdiocese to study policies for children of same-sex couples**

BOSTON - After the decision by a Boston archdiocesan Catholic school to rescind its acceptance of the child of a same-sex couple, Boston Cardinal Sean P. O'Malley said archdiocesan officials would "develop policies and procedures" to guide schools on the issue.

"The Archdiocese of Denver has formulated a policy that calls into question the appropriateness of admitting the children of same-sex couples. It is clear that all of their school policies are intended to foster the welfare of the children and fidelity to the mission of the church," Cardinal O'Malley said in a May 19 blog post. "Their positions and rationale must be seriously considered."

In March, the Archdiocese of Denver upheld a Boulder, Colo., Catholic school's decision not to re-enroll the child of a same-sex couple.

Cardinal O'Malley's remarks were posted on [www.cardinalseansblog.org](http://www.cardinalseansblog.org) about one week after St. Paul School in Hingham withdrew its acceptance of a lesbian couple's child. The cardinal was on a pilgrimage to Fatima, Portugal, when the news originally surfaced.

In his blog, he stressed that the primary issue is how to make Catholic schools available to children from "diverse, often unconventional households, while ensuring the moral theology and teachings of the church are not compromised?"

The cardinal defended the school's decision and the pastor, Father James Rafferty, noting that the priest's actions were based on what he thought would be best for the child.

In a May 18 interview with The Pilot, Boston's archdiocesan newspaper, the vicar general of the archdiocese and its moderator of the curia also defended Father Rafferty.

"In this (case), the decision he made had far-reaching consequences," said Father Richard Erikson, adding that the archdiocese does not have a specific policy that addresses whether children of same-sex parents should be admitted to Catholic schools.

Although the archdiocesan schools' office is upholding St. Paul's decision, the archdiocese does not prohibit children of same-sex parents from attending Catholic school and officials have promised to help the parents find another Catholic school for their child.

Mary Grassa O'Neill, archdiocesan school superintendent, said in a May 13 statement that she met with St. Paul officials about the decision and told the applicant's parent she would help her find another Catholic school for her son.

"She was gracious and appreciative of the suggestion and indicated that she would look forward to considering some other Catholic schools that would welcome her child for the next academic year," O'Neill's statement said in part.

Father Frank Daley, pastor of Sts. Martha and Mary Parish in Lakeville and a close friend of Father Rafferty's, said the Hingham priest has received numerous phone calls, both supporting and criticizing his decision. Since the incident occurred, Father Rafferty has declined media interviews and referred all inquiries to the archdiocese.

"He is very upset by the whole situation. It's been a tough week and a half," Father Daley said.

The Catholic Schools Foundation, an independent organization that provides scholarships to students at inner-city Catholic schools, weighed in on the situation with a letter clarifying its funding requirements.

It said the organization will not fund schools that have "an exclusionary admissions policy or practice" and that refuse to admit students of same-sex parents.

The May 13 letter was signed by the organization's executive director Mike Reardon and sent to the administrators of all elementary and high schools in the archdiocese.

“We believe a policy or practice that denies admission to students in such a manner as occurred at St. Paul’s is at odds with our values as a foundation, the intentions of our donors, and ultimately with Gospel teaching.”

Catholics United, a national Catholic organization that promotes social justice, similarly objected to the decision and circulated a petition on its website calling for the archdiocese to allow the applicant to attend St. Paul School and “allow all children to have access to a Catholic education.”

The group collected nearly 5,000 signatures, according to James Salt, director of organizing.

“We humbly ask Cardinal O’Malley to intervene in this matter and allow this child to attend St. Paul Elementary School,” said Chris Korzen, Catholics United’s executive director, in a May 13 statement. “In making this request, we do not intend to challenge the church’s teaching on marriage and relationships. Rather, we simply believe that no one should be denied the benefits of a Catholic education on the basis of their parents’ background.”

C.J. Doyle, executive director of Catholic Action League of Massachusetts, urged the archdiocese to support St. Paul’s, calling the school’s action “entirely appropriate, warranted, and necessary.”

“The admission of a child of a lesbian couple to a Catholic school would only result in self-censorship, and de facto acceptance of same-sex marriage and same-sex adoption,” Doyle’s statement said in part.

Doyle also questioned why a same-sex couple would want to enroll children in Catholic schools.

“A student is admitted to a parochial school with the expectation that the parents will cooperate in imparting Catholic values, a condition which it clearly does not obtain in this case,” he said. “The real question here is why two people who radically repudiate the moral teachings of Catholicism would want their child educated in a Catholic school.”