

**SCHOOL
ADVISORY COUNCIL
POLICY MANUAL
2026**





CONTENTS

School Advisory Council Manual.....	3
Appendices	
MACS Code of Conduct for School Advisory Council Members.....	35
Aquinas College School Advisory Council Terms of Reference.....	36
MACS Mission Statement: <i>Working Together in Mission</i>	49
School Advisory Council Member Profiles.....	76
School Advisory Council Office Bearers	79
School Advisory Council Goals.....	80
Finance and Risk Management Committee.....	81
School Advisory Council Dates 2026	82
Formation Seminars 2014–2025.....	83
Declaration of Good Character.....	85
Aquinas College Vision and Mission	86
Attributes of an Aquinas College Student.....	87
Enrolment Policy.....	88
Enrolment Policy Years 8–12	90
Aquinas College Enrolment Agreement.....	91
College Communication With Non-Custodial Guardians.....	99
Private Income Policy.....	101
College Map.....	107



Melbourne Archdiocese
Catholic Schools

School Advisory Council Manual

For all MACS schools



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Contents

Foreword by Archbishop Peter	6
Preface	7
Introduction	9
Catholic education in the Archdiocese of Melbourne	10
What are Catholic schools about?	11
What are School Advisory Councils?	11
Advisory in nature.....	13
Enhance relationship between parish and school.....	13
Articulate and supportive	13
What they are.....	14
What they do.....	14
List of delegated and other responsibilities.....	15
Multiple schools with a single parish priest	16
Council structures	17
Guide to MACS School Advisory Council Terms of Reference	17
Membership.....	17
Expectations of members	18
Legal status of members	19
Parent voice	19
Succession planning.....	19
Council activities	20
Guide to conducting meetings	20
Prayer.....	20
Agendas and minutes.....	20
Consensus.....	21
Induction and formation.....	21
Parents and friends associations	24
Support documentation	25
Templates	25
Suggested models.....	26
Information handouts	26
Policies and documentation	27
Foundational documents.....	27
Policies.....	27
MACS support structures	29
Resources	30
Shortened forms	31
Glossary	31

Foreword by Archbishop Peter

A Catholic education is a distinctive way of schooling that is infused with a Catholic vision and is imbued with all that our Catholic intellectual tradition offers. It provides students with an understanding of the deep meaning and value of our humanity, which has been a sustaining good for Australian society for 200 years.

With this great legacy in mind, and in a spirit of collegiality and goodwill, I called parish priests together at the end of 2019 to begin a process of developing new governance arrangements for schools belonging to the Archdiocese of Melbourne.

After extensive consultation, Melbourne Archdiocese Catholic Schools (MACS) was created as a company limited by guarantee to govern and operate schools that were previously governed by parishes or the Archdiocese. Through its *Statement of Mission*, MACS ensures that those schools 'provide the young with the best kind of education possible' in an environment that 'is actively embedded in the life of the faith communities of the local Church, which in turn is tangibly manifest in the life of each school'.

This focus on local context aims to ensure that our schools have a eucharistic character that builds communities gathered around a shared life of faith and worship, which provides an opportunity for personal transformation for students and their families.

The establishment of School Advisory Councils underscores that commitment. It reflects our conviction that Catholic education needs parish priests, parents and school leaders working together in mission.

This *School Advisory Council Manual* is written for the people in each community who have agreed to work together to accomplish that shared conviction. The School Advisory Council is entrusted with a role that is founded on Christ's model of servanthood to others.

In this proud history, and in the work ahead, we build school communities in which the Holy Spirit breathes life and wisdom liberally, and in which that same Spirit inspires new energy for learning the art of wisdom and growing in knowledge and understanding. I commend this Manual to the 1,500 volunteers who make up the School Advisory Councils across nearly 300 schools.



Most Rev. Peter A Comensoli
Archbishop of Melbourne

Preface

School Advisory Councils are an essential component of governing and operating Catholic schools in the Archdiocese of Melbourne. They provide a forum for consultation and participation for parish and school communities, ensuring that schools are accountable for the decisions they make.

Each council is designed for, and works within, the context of its specific school. As such, School Advisory Councils are a living expression of the principle of subsidiarity in action, representing MACS' commitment to ensuring that responsibility is taken as prudence and necessity dictate, and local agency is preserved for school communities as appropriate.

At the same time, each council must be structured to ensure it can properly exercise its role in the important matters in which it will have input, such as school improvement, master plans, representation on the principal appointment panel and knowledge about the annual budget.

MACS has produced a range of supporting materials to ensure School Advisory Councils can meet these goals. These documents include the *Working Together in Mission* charter – developed in partnership with stakeholders, the MACS Terms of Reference for School Advisory Councils templates and now this *School Advisory Council Manual*. Various resources are accessible via links from this publication to keep council members up to date on MACS policy and ensure they are able to undertake their role with confidence. Templates have been provided to support the development of structures and processes across the system.

In reading this Manual, I hope you will take away a sense of how a School Advisory Council works: its purpose, structures and guiding principles, which illustrate how its work both fits within the life of each school and supports MACS' governance role.



Dr Edward Simons
Executive Director
Melbourne Archdiocese Catholic Schools



Introduction

Through service on a School Advisory Council, members of the parish¹ and school communities will be making an important contribution to their school's strategic, educational, financial and spiritual development.

Because of these important responsibilities, it is essential that School Advisory Council members understand what the councils will do and what their role will be.

This *School Advisory Council Manual* supports the aims of the MACS Terms of Reference for School Advisory Councils which, contextualised for each individual school, provides the foundation for the operation of a School Advisory Council.

The Manual delivers an overview of Catholic schools and the context in which they operate, before detailing the principles that inform the role that councils will play to support MACS schools. There is also a comprehensive overview of how School Advisory Councils will work.

Finally, the Manual links to the important supporting documentation and policies that council members will need to understand as part of their role.

If you are considering joining a School Advisory Council or are a current member of one, you will find this Manual's content to be an invaluable aid to the contribution you are making to your school.

¹The term 'parish' is used interchangeably with 'parishes' depending upon context.

Catholic education in the Archdiocese of Melbourne

Canon 803 of the *Code of Canon Law* states that:

A catholic school is understood to be one which is under the control of the competent ecclesiastical authority ... No school, even if it is in fact catholic, may bear the title 'catholic school' except by the consent of the competent ecclesiastical authority.

The 'competent authority' in the Archdiocese of Melbourne is the Archbishop of Melbourne who, as chief pastor and teacher, is responsible for Catholic schools within his jurisdiction. The Archbishop has an obligation to watch over and inspect Catholic schools situated in his territory, even those established or directed by members of religious institutes.

Melbourne Archdiocese Catholic Schools (MACS) was established by Archbishop Peter A Comensoli to be responsible for the governance and operation of 292 parish primary schools and regional and archdiocesan secondary colleges in the Archdiocese of Melbourne. School Advisory Councils have been established in these schools to support and advise the principal. The principal promotes the school's Catholic identity and is the educational leader of the school who has been assigned its operational management and, in

collaboration with the parish priest as custodian of mission, is mandated to lead the school in drawing young people and their families into the knowledge and understanding of Jesus of the gospel.

For ease of use throughout, reference to 'parish priest' will include priest moderator, parochial administrator, member of an association of canonical administrators or Archbishop's nominee, including their role as custodian of mission. When used in this document, and all School Advisory Council support documents, 'custodian of mission' designates their specific role in relation to schools and their title in reference to their ex-officio duties on a School Advisory Council.

Together the principal as educational leader and the parish priest as custodian of mission, through their collaborative work with the School Advisory Council, will ensure that, at the local level, Catholic schools remain 'actively embedded in the life of the faith communities of the local Church, which in turn is tangibly manifest in the life of each school'.

MACS governs and supports Catholic schools in the Archdiocese to continue the mission of Catholic education to proclaim the Good News and equip young people with the knowledge, skills and hope to live meaningful lives and enrich the world around them.

This is reflected in the *Statement of Mission* contained in the MACS Constitution. The constitution captures the purpose of MACS and places students at the centre of the mission. The intent is to continue the rich history of delivering a high-quality Catholic education in the Archdiocese of Melbourne.

MACS serves and leads *all* Catholic schools in the Archdiocese of Melbourne, including the religious institute and ministerial public juridic person schools, providing a range of services to support nearly 23,000 teaching and non-teaching staff in 334 Catholic schools serving more than 154,000 students (August 2023 figures). As the religious institute and ministerial public juridic person schools are not governed by MACS, this Manual does not apply to the operation of any council or board in these schools.



What are Catholic schools about?

Catholic schools are:

- accountable for working together with parents in the education of their children
- committed to working together with the Church in faith education
- community providers of a public service
- committed to the achievement of the national goal of promoting 'equity and excellence'²
- significant service providers delivering a cost-effective service to the community
- welcoming communities that promote quality interpersonal relationships
- inclusive and safe, and foster a strong sense of wellbeing
- accountable for the proper expenditure of government funds and parent fees
- accountable to parents and governments for student learning.

Catholic schools:

- practise and celebrate Christian values
- offer an outstanding education as schools of first choice for Catholic parents
- provide religious education and opportunities for faith development in communities where prayer and sacramental celebrations are integral
- educate for engagement in civic and public life, involving community service and issues of social justice
- provide high-quality academic, social and vocational education
- build environments focused on achievement, challenge, creativity and enjoyment
- include highly qualified and caring teachers committed to the ethos of Catholic education.

What are School Advisory Councils?

Prior to the transfer to a corporate entity responsible for the governance and operation of the schools, Catholic schools already had a tradition of advisory parish education boards and college boards under various names in the Archdiocese. The 'new' – post-2021 – mandated School Advisory Councils are grounded both in this strong local foundation of what has already existed and functioned effectively in Catholic education in the Archdiocese, and as part of our wider Catholic tradition that sees advice given in the framework of mutual respect, right relationship and hope: a foundation of our trinitarian faith.

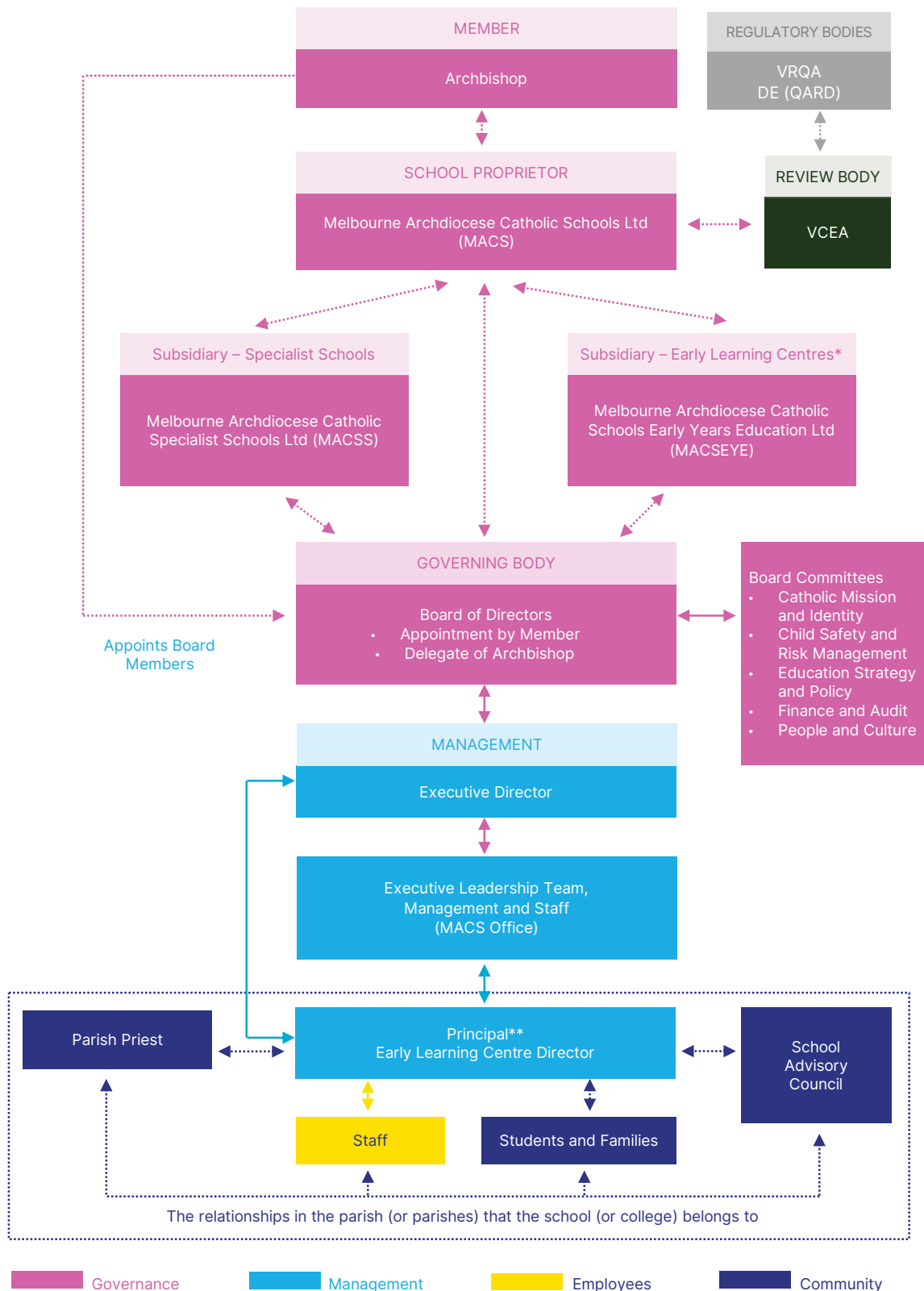
While the MACS board has fiduciary responsibility for strategic direction and oversight of the management of MACS' operations, a range of powers and functions is delegated to the executive director who in turn

determines the appropriate operating model within the company for the delegation to be exercised. The MACS board, as the governing body of all MACS schools, is responsible for making any decision about the establishment of a School Advisory Council and its arrangements.

Clear lines of authority, reporting and delegation have been established which assign the operational management of the school to the principal and particular advisory responsibilities to the School Advisory Council. Similarly, in relation to the operational management of the School Advisory Council, the principal acts on delegation by the MACS Executive Director who in turn acts on delegations from the MACS board.

²Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA), *Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians*, MCEETYA, Melbourne, 2008, p. 7.

What are School Advisory Councils? (continued)



* governance arrangements for operation of early learning centres are currently being considered

** principal executive officer (PEO) for Commonwealth Register of Institutions and Courses for Overseas Students (CRICOS), chief executive officer (CEO) for registered training organisation (RTO) and PEO for student exchange organisation (SEO)

The particular advisory responsibilities of the School Advisory Council and the principal's authority in relation to the operational management of the School Advisory Council have been detailed through the provision of:

- *Working Together in Mission* – a charter for parishes and schools in the Archdiocese of Melbourne
- MACS Terms of Reference for School Advisory Councils – templates for each school to modify for local context to establish and operationalise their council.

Below is a summary of key statements from those documents.

Advisory in nature

School Advisory Councils are advisory bodies which form an important expression of the educational partnership that exists between parents, schools, parishes and the wider community to support all students. This partnership is reflected in the ex-officio membership of both the principal and the parish priest on the council. What the council does is directed by the MACS board through the Terms of Reference for School Advisory Councils.

The School Advisory Council provides a forum for discussion and discernment, where parent voice and community perspective are available to influence and support the decisions made by the principal and parish priest for the good of school and parish where students' wellbeing and outcomes are paramount.

Enhance relationship between parish and school

At the heart of our Catholic tradition lies relationship. The relationship between the parish and the school in the provision of Catholic education is crucial to the faith development and learning outcomes of students, the enlivening of parish life and the development of community. It is important that schools and councils:

- recognise, develop and maintain fruitful relationships within the parish
- recognise the role of the school in the overall mission of the parish

- recognise the contribution of parish to school
- support the relationship between school and parish
- play an active role in the life of the parish.

The *Working Together in Mission* charter acknowledges that the School Advisory Council plays a role in supporting the parish priest and principal relationship as a means of building the parish and school community. There are clear expectations that monthly, if not fortnightly, meetings between the parish priest and principal in turn provide a firm foundation for the work of the council. Investment of time and resources in life-giving relationships between the parish priest, principal and families breathes life into the Catholic school community.

Processes and strategies to further cultivate an environment of support and encouragement through induction and formation of School Advisory Council members will be developed by the Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne and MACS through the combined efforts of the Episcopal Vicar for Catholic Schools and the School Advisory Councils Secretariat.

Articulate and supportive

Through ongoing discussion and reporting, the relationship between the School Advisory Council, parish priest and principal provides evidence that supports the school's published clear statement of its philosophy and enables it to 'demonstrate how the school's philosophy is enacted' per Schedule 4 clause 16 in the *Education and Training Reform Regulations 2017* (Vic.).

School Advisory Councils provide a structure and a process for shared voices leading to consensus that supports 'the effective development of the strategic direction of the school' per Schedule 4 clause 15(1) (a) in the *Education and Training Reform Regulations*. School Advisory Councils give opportunity for dialogue where members listen to each other in a way that creates positive connections and builds good relationships, enabling the council to explore ideas and proposals with greater consistency over time.

What are School Advisory Councils? (continued)

What they are

School Advisory Councils:

- form part of the broader governance framework of MACS (ToR)
- are a consultative, review and advisory body
- are found in all MACS schools, both primary and secondary levels (WTiM)
- are guided in their actions by the MACS Statement of Mission, and an understanding of the history of the parish, founders and school (ToR)
- are a forum for parents to share their wisdom with, and offer support to, the principal and the strategic interests of the school (ToR; WTiM)
- are a sounding board for all stakeholders that provides feedback to the principal and parish priest
- are an important point of liaison with parish pastoral councils (WTiM)
- are avenues for parents to contribute to their children's school and build up one another (WTiM)
- will fit the pastoral model of each particular parish or association of parishes (WTiM)
- are a form of Church lay ministry (ToR)
- are a means of engagement with parents that enables a fruitful participation in consultation on matters affecting the education of students (WTiM).
- encouraging the partnership and participation of the school, parish and wider community in the life of the school and parish
- providing advice to the principal on school improvement, school reviews, the annual school budget and other financial matters, the school master plan, capital resource planning and maintenance
- contributing to the selection process for the school principal via membership of the selection panel as per MACS and Victorian Catholic Education Authority Ltd (VCEA) policies and guidelines
- contributing to the panel that guides the process of principal appraisal as per MACS and VCEA policies and guidelines
- receiving reports from the principal to be informed as per requirements in various MACS and VCEA policies and guidelines
- having a process of discernment that provides the foundation for the induction of council members
- developing processes of consultation and providing a forum for discussion and discernment, where parent voice and perspective are available to inform and support the decisions made by the principal and the parish priest for the good of school and parish where students' wellbeing and outcomes are paramount
- understanding and acknowledging that any initiative that materially affects the school's land and buildings or other areas of parish property must be approved by the parish priest, who represents their parish as the beneficial owner of the school's land and buildings
- acting within the parameters of the MACS Terms of Reference for School Advisory Councils
- producing a School Advisory Council Annual Report that acknowledges the activities, achievements and challenges of the council over the past year, and indicates goals and focus for the following year
- undertaking an annual evaluation to reflect upon its performance and areas for improvement.

What they do

The following are some examples of ways the School Advisory Council may support the school and the principal:

- ensuring that, at the local level, Catholic schools remain 'actively embedded in the life of the faith communities of the local Church, which in turn is tangibly manifest in the life of each school'
- articulating and enacting the school's mission and vision, and promoting the school's Catholic ethos and culture by promoting faith formation and development

School Advisory Councils:

- are not the governing body of a school
- do not have a decision-making authority (WTiM)
- do not have a legal identity
- do not become involved in the day-to-day management of the school
- are not a forum for parent advocacy or special interest representation
- are not a parents and friends association
- are not a fundraising forum or fete-organising committee.

List of delegated and other responsibilities

The principal should inform the School Advisory Council on the following items:³

- **School Bank Accounts and Banking Matters**
 - Opening and closing of school bank accounts
- **Budgets**
 - Annual Operational/Capital Budgets and Cashflow
 - Secondary: when budget is in surplus or deficit
- **Purchasing**
 - Preferred suppliers list <\$100,000

For all the following when ≥\$100,000 for primary schools or ≥\$300,000 for secondary schools:

- Tenders for Operational Projects per tender
- Tenders for Building Projects per tender
- Tenders for IT Projects per tender
- Purchase orders for Operational Projects, Capital Building Projects and Capital IT Projects per purchase order



- **Fee Management**
 - Any setting or variation of fees, compulsory tuition charges, excursions, levies which result in an increase on prior year
 - Write-offs, discounts, rebates (exemptions of recurrent and capital fees, compulsory tuition charges, excursions, levies)
- **Asset Management**
 - Share School Master Plan
 - Sale of school fixed assets ≥\$10,000 per asset (purchase price)
 - Sale of school property (land/buildings)

Note: This is an information stage that has no impact on the decision-making. It will be used for informing a stakeholder of specific actions they may wish to be informed about.

A representative of the School Advisory Council will be involved in the following items as determined by the appropriate MACS and VCEA policy:

- school review
- master planning
- principal appointment
- principal review.

³[Delegations Register](#) on CEVN

What are School Advisory Councils? (continued)

Multiple schools with a single parish priest

The MACS board has determined that each school must have its own School Advisory Council with the parish priest as ex-officio member of the council.

In a one-school, one-parish situation, it is straightforward that there will be a single School Advisory Council with the parish priest and principal as ex-officio members of the council.

However, in a situation where more than one school is located within a single parish community, an overarching advisory council covering all of the schools may be advisable in order to support the individual councils at each school. The parish priest and principals will need to discern the various differences and needs of each school within the one-parish context before deciding on a model. This discernment should also give consideration to the number of meetings required annually for the overarching School Advisory Council and for each individual school, and the number of meetings the parish priest will be required to attend. The parish priest is an ex-officio member of each council and the MACS Terms of Reference for School Advisory Councils does not allow for any permanent delegation.

It is suggested that the overarching council addresses matters such as Catholic identity, mission, religious instruction and connectedness to parish, whereas each school will have its own local council to address matters such as school improvement, master plans, representation on the principal appointment panel, etc.

However, another model is that there is no overarching School Advisory Council, but the parish priest meets with the principals collectively from time to time, maintaining their ex-officio status and avoiding any permanent delegation. Another possible example that focuses on ensuring communication is prioritised between the parish and school involves the arrangement of opportunities for the parish priest to attend quarterly 'pastoral gatherings' with the

school principals (or their delegates) to discuss parish initiatives, staff wellbeing, families in need and local social justice projects.

It is important to keep in mind that, with the evolving reorganisation of parish structures within the Archdiocese, local circumstances and structures will be changed to respond to the signs of the times, acknowledging the 'challenges, wounds and disruptions of recent years, coupled with the life-changing reality of the COVID pandemic'.⁴

As outlined in Archbishop Peter A Comensoli's 2021 Pentecost Pastoral Letter, because parishes remain at the heart of the gathering of God's people locally, 'we need to adapt the way we resource our local communities' and 'walk together towards a more energised purpose for our local Church' (p. 2). In light of the Archdiocese's pastoral plan of reimagining our local churches as mission communities, it is envisioned that the parish priest will be responsible for the pastoral care of an increasing number of parishes and their schools. This may mean that the instances of multiple schools within single or multiple parish communities could increasingly become our lived reality. Therefore, as the Archdiocese embraces mission communities comprising a family of local faith communities, or whose priest administers multiple parishes, additional structures will need to be put in place to support both the priest's obligation as the ex-officio member of each School Advisory Council and the individual councils at each school with their various differences and needs.

Whichever model is selected, building on the spirit of the recommendations of the *Working Together in Mission* charter, it is an expectation that the parish priest and the principal meet at least on a monthly basis, if not fortnightly, in the pursuit of maintaining the catholicity of the school and connectedness to parish, and providing what is best in enhancing educational opportunities for the students and their families. In this way, both principal and parish priest cultivate an environment of support and encouragement.

⁴PA Comensoli, *Take the Way of the Gospel: Re-imagining our local Church as mission communities*, Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne, East Melbourne, 2021, p. 1.

Council structures

Guide to MACS School Advisory Council Terms of Reference

Each school has the flexibility to adapt the MACS School Advisory Council Terms of Reference template to suit its own particular needs. A single template allows for different contexts:

1. schools in a single parish
2. secondary schools
3. schools belonging to a mission community comprising a family of local faith communities, or whose priest administers multiple parishes.

The template is to be shaped and contextualised for each school, and placed on the school website. It remains a MACS document on company letterhead.

It is the primary task of principals in consultation with the parish priest to work through the **yellow** highlighted guidance notes to determine and co-design the key elements of the School Advisory Council in alignment with the MACS School Advisory Council Terms of Reference template. This co-design can be achieved through a shared discernment process, which is ongoing and will need to occur each time a new principal or new parish priest is appointed to the school or parish. The renewal will ensure there is common ground as a basis for them working together in mission.

Please read the [MACS School Advisory Council Terms of Reference](#) template. It is designed to provide a MACS school with the structure for its School Advisory Council. The handout, [Tailoring of the Terms of Reference](#), works through the ten areas that asks principals and parish priests to provide local input.

Membership

The principle of solidarity means that, across all MACS schools, the School Advisory Council is to comprise a minimum of six members, including the ex-officio members of principal and parish priest.

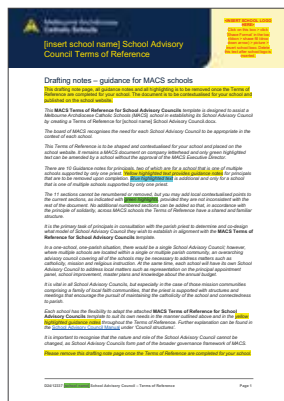
For those secondary schools where an association of canonical administrators is present, a representative of the association, most likely the president, will be an ex-officio member of the council acting as the custodian of mission. More details on the role of an association of canonical administrators can be found on the [MACS website](#). For those secondary schools that previously had an association of delegated canonical administrators, an Archbishop's nominee will be appointed as an ex-officio member of the council acting as the custodian of mission.

As per the *Working Together in Mission* charter, there is an expectation that there be mutual understanding and trust between the principal and the parish priest as custodian of mission as they work together to confirm the principal's appointment of members onto the School Advisory Council.

Section 4 of a MACS school's Terms of Reference for their School Advisory Council outlines that appointment to the council occurs following an expression of interest and discernment process that seeks to arrive at a decision about appointment. Both the expression of interest and discernment process are locally determined by each MACS school, and detailed in the contextualised version of the MACS Terms of Reference for School Advisory Councils on each school's website.

An expression of interest does not mean automatic appointment to the School Advisory Council. When appointments are being made, the needs of the council will be given priority in terms of ensuring a balance of gender, cultural diversity and skill sets. While inclusion of any person who wishes to be a member of the School Advisory Council is paramount, consideration will be given to members with particular skills and experience that meet the needs of the council.

The parishioner on the School Advisory Council is a person known to be active in the parish. In order to maintain the connection between parish and school, it is envisaged that the parishioner who is a member of the School Advisory Council will liaise with, or may have membership of, the Parish Pastoral Council to maintain communication between school and parish.



Council structures (continued)

In the process of appointing council members, the principal will consult with the parish priest following a process of discernment. When appointments are being made, it is important to keep in mind the following key considerations (as outlined in Section 4 of the Terms of Reference), as well as the need for a balance of gender, cultural diversity and skill sets in forming the council:

- Child Safe Standards
- MACS Code of Conduct for School Advisory Council members
- conflict of interest
- diversity.

The principal and the parish priest may choose to be supported by others in the appointment process. The principal has the power of appointment, in consultation with the parish priest, and arranges the letters of appointment.

The principle of subsidiarity allows the principal and parish priest to appoint additional members up to the recommended maximum of 10, according to local need.

As stated below, membership must be composed of people who meet high standards of community, group and individual behaviour, and appreciate, value and share the educational mission and ethos of the Catholic Church.

The principal may, following consultation with the parish priest, remove a council member (except the parish priest) if the principal is of the view that the member is not complying with the expectations of the role of a council member, or is engaged in conduct unbecoming of a council member or prejudicial to the interests of the school.

Expectations of members

As the School Advisory Council is not a governing body and has no canon/civil law or corporate status, its appointed members do not need to prove their status as a 'responsible person' as defined in the *Education and Training Reform Regulations*, and thus do not need to undertake the Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority (VRQA) fit and proper person declaration or the National Police Check.

However, council membership must be fit for purpose and composed of people who meet high standards of community, group and individual behaviour, and appreciate, value and share the educational mission and ethos of the Catholic Church.

In this light and as stated in the MACS Terms of Reference for School Advisory Councils, each member of the council will receive a letter of appointment that will require them to:

- sign the school's Child Safety Code of Conduct (available from the school)
- undertake a Working with Children Check as per the [Worker Screening Act 2020](#) (Vic.)
- accept the [MACS Code of Conduct for School Advisory Council members](#).

The school's Child Safety Code of Conduct affirms the educational mission and ethos of the Catholic Church by helping protect children from sexual and physical harm, and making sure that people who work with or care for children undergo a thorough checking process. It also sets up, from page 1, the baseline expectation that, like all members of the school community, council members 'are expected to actively contribute to a school culture by respecting the dignity of its members, affirming the gospel values of love, care for others, compassion and justice'.

This baseline standard is expanded and made explicit in the MACS Code of Conduct for School Advisory Council members. The objective of this Code of Conduct is to ensure that high standards of community, group and individual behaviour are observed by the members in the context of their roles as members of any School Advisory Council of a MACS school.

Further details on the expectations, qualities and skills needed by a council member are outlined clearly in Section 5 of each school's Terms of Reference for their School Advisory Council. Similarly, any coopted members of committees of the School Advisory Council who are not council members will be held to the same expectations as those of a council member, as outlined in Section 5.

Legal status of members

School Advisory Council members are volunteers working collaboratively with the principal in the stewardship of the school within the context of MACS.

MACS will ensure that under applicable insurance, members of a School Advisory Council, committee or working party are covered by professional indemnity insurance for work undertaken in good faith in the course of discharging their duties. Public liability policy covers injury suffered by people who are not employees, i.e. volunteers.

Furthermore, in relation to injury or damage caused by volunteers, volunteers are protected by section 37 of the *Wrongs Act 1958* (Vic.) which effectively provides that the organisation is liable for anything done, or not done, in good faith by a volunteer while performing activities on behalf of the organisation.

Parent voice

School Advisory Councils provide a structure and a process for shared voices leading to consensus that supports 'the effective development of the strategic direction of the school',⁵ and give opportunity for parent voice and community perspective to be available to the principal and the parish priest for the good of school and parish where students' wellbeing and outcomes are paramount.

Parent engagement can be challenging in some schools, and principals are encouraged to use the local school resources as much as possible in order to engage with a wide audience of parents. Other recommendations include:

- using the person responsible for family partnerships to assist in leading the process of engaging with people from multicultural backgrounds
- engaging with leaders of the various cultural groups in the school to hold focus groups for people of different backgrounds
- having the same people translate documentation where possible
- using the parent letter to introduce the idea of a School Advisory Council.

Further information about School Advisory Councils and other ways in which school communities can be authentic in engaging parent voice can be found at the following MACS links:

- [School Advisory Councils](#)
- [Parents as Partners](#)
- [Family and Community Engagement](#).

Background information about MACS can be found on the following webpages:

- [About us](#)
- [Who we are](#).

Succession planning

Succession planning is critical to the council's development. It is the responsibility of each council member to enhance the profile of the council in the parish and school communities, and bring potential council members to the attention of the council executive. The inclusion of non-council members on committees and working parties is a useful tool in succession planning. The council should be conscious of the need to prepare current council members for taking the role of office bearers. One way to do this is by introducing a suitable person to the position of deputy chair 12 months before the chair is due to step down. This arrangement provides an opportunity for the deputy chair to understudy the chair with a view to taking over the following year. The deputy chair could also relieve the chair of some duties during the chair's final year.

⁵[Education and Training Reform Regulations](#), Schedule 4 clause 15(1)(a).

Council activities

Guide to conducting meetings

Council meetings will be structured to demonstrate that the care, safety and wellbeing of children and young people are a central and fundamental responsibility of our schools.

Council members will:

- contribute in such a way that school council advice will be based on all available facts, will normally be reached by consensus and will be free of personal bias
- accept the final position of the council regardless of their personal position on any issue
- invest the necessary time, thought and study into the council's work between and at meetings
- refer day-to-day administrative and operational matters or problems to the principal.

Council structures will reflect an understanding and acknowledgment of the Catholic tradition through the council's engagement with prayer and the relational nature of its dealings.

Prayer

Prayer in School Advisory Council meetings should be reflective of our Catholic tradition and allow for reference to the school charism, mission and signs of the times where appropriate.

Prayers at a meeting can be a contradiction in terms. Allowing time to discover the most important relationship there is – our relationship with God – seems at odds with the purpose of the gathering: the urgent need of the items of business.

Yet prayer gives us an opportunity to align these two purposes to see the work of the meeting as an expression of our relationship with God.

Sometimes brief prayers will be apt, but at other times the council members may want to spend time on a more extended prayer, particularly if there has been something happening in their school community. Some

schools have a school prayer or prayer associated with a founder or patron that should be encouraged for use on occasion.

The seasons of the liturgical year – Advent, Christmas, Lent and Easter – as well as the gospel reading of the day or the previous Sunday are rich sources of inspiration within our tradition. [Daily Prayer](#) on the MACS Religious Education website [RESource](#) is a portal into a rich source of prayer resources. This format models prayer structures that can be used in their entirety or adapted to meet the needs of the audience and local context as required.

Councils are encouraged to use these prayer resources if needed, but to consider that prayer is always authentic when developed in context. There is also a resource on [commissioning and blessing ceremonies](#) that play an important role in acknowledging that 'serving on the School Advisory Council of a Catholic school is a form of Church lay ministry'.⁶

Agendas and minutes

Agendas are advance notices of a meeting that set out what business will be considered in the meeting. They need to be circulated at least a week prior to the meeting, with any important proposal having been highlighted and any relevant documentation also having been circulated.

A properly structured agenda will assist the School Advisory Council to make the most of its meetings, and enable the members to make informed contributions on the basis of sound advice and constructive debate. A [suggested model](#) and further information via a [handout](#) are available on the MACS website.

The minutes of School Advisory Council meetings must be consistently formatted with clear item headings, regular spacing and highlighted moments of agreement by consensus.

Well-presented minutes make it easy for users to locate items of interest, and identify the results of deliberations and consensus. Their structure follows

⁶MACS Terms of Reference for School Advisory Councils, Section 3.

the order of the agenda. Minutes should be maintained in an appropriate archive system at the school. A [suggested model](#) and further information via a [handout](#) are available on the MACS website.

Consensus

In the conduct of School Advisory Council meetings, it is important that conversations are encouraged. Good, healthy dialogue where members listen to each other creates positive connections and builds good relationships, enabling the council to explore ideas and proposals.

Equally important is that members enter the meeting well-prepared for the discussions that will take place. An agenda will have been circulated prior to the meeting, with any important proposal having been highlighted and any relevant documentation having been circulated. This will provide an opportunity for informed dialogue to take place rather than ‘off the cuff’ thinking.

It is hoped that a well-informed discussion where each person has had a chance to speak, has been listened to intently and feels their ideas have been respected will lead to proposals and ideas being agreed to by consensus. At the heart of an agreement

by consensus is the ongoing welfare of the group and good relationships of the members appropriate to a Catholic School Advisory Council.

Induction and formation

The induction and formation processes offered through both MACS and the school aim to ensure the promotion of a Catholic skill set for council members and their role as leaders in the parish and school community.

Induction is the formal, structured and supportive method of introducing council members to the School Advisory Council and MACS. MACS provides a basis for induction through the provision of key documents, support resources and annual induction sessions across the Archdiocese. Each school is responsible for an induction program that is customised to ensure council members understand their role and the role of the council within the context of the school and the wider Church.

Through their reading of the key documents and engagement with the school process, it is expected that each member will understand the purpose of a School Advisory Council and each person’s role in pursuing that purpose.

Offered by MACS personnel	Offered by the school
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group induction: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – principals and parish priests – chairs – annually – members – annually to celebrate new appointments – parents – annually to explore expressions of interest • Individual online training – members and chairs • Regional networks of chairs • Visits to School Advisory Council meetings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pre-appointment discernment • Information packs with access to key foundation documents • Chances for potential nominees to discuss the role of the council • Distribution of letters of appointment with access to all documents listed in the letter • Exploration of the call to strategically share skills and talents for the betterment of the school • Commissioning and blessing ceremonies • Follow-up briefings after the first council meeting • Mentoring and buddy systems

Council activities (continued)

By the school

A breakdown of the possible activities is recommended to form part of any member's induction program as well as the purpose behind them. These activities can be listed in Section 4 of the Terms of Reference through guidance notes 5, 6 and 8, which allow schools to demonstrate how they support new

council members in being inducted to the mission of MACS and the school, and the business and processes of the council. These meetings do not need to take place separately – they could all be part of the one meeting with the council, leadership team, parish priest, mentors, etc. or in any combination deemed appropriate in the local context.

Activity	Purpose
Pre-appointment discernment process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide an information pack with access to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – MACS <i>Statement of Mission</i> – school vision and mission – <i>Working Together in Mission</i> – Terms of Reference – MACS Code of Conduct for School Advisory Council members • Provide a chance for potential nominees to discuss the role of the council and the expectations of a council member with the principal, chair or parish priest
Letter of appointment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outline expectations • Provide access to all documents listed in the letter
Meeting with the chair	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explain the School Advisory Council's purpose • Discuss the role of a member on the School Advisory Council • Outline the specific expectations of the council, as per letter of appointment
Site visit to school to meet with the principal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overview the role of the principal in MACS governance framework • Overview the school's strategic direction and key initiatives • Introduce key members of the leadership team
First meeting with the parish priest and full council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gain awareness of the connection between parish and school • Introduce other members and discuss their roles on the School Advisory Council • Discuss current members' experiences and impressions of the position and its responsibilities • Attend question and answer session
Introductory School Advisory Council course	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undertake professional development with MACS to understand the practical implications of the role (for experienced members, this might be a 'refresher' course)
Meeting with allocated 'mentor' member(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss approach to the School Advisory Council's process and involvement • Conduct ongoing discussions on 'how' to be a member • Answer general questions • Provide a debrief of the first meeting
Commissioning and blessing ceremony	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acknowledge that 'serving on the School Advisory Council of a Catholic school is a form of Church lay ministry'. (Ceremony may be a liturgy, Mass or paraliturgical service that takes place in either the parish or school)
Ongoing sessions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore the shared understanding that membership on the council is a call to strategically share skills and talents for the betterment of the school and the quality of education being provided for all the students

Formation is the process of ongoing learning and understanding of the ethos and spirit of a Catholic school, and the collective and individual role each member plays in the development of the School Advisory Council.

MACS will provide appropriate ongoing professional and spiritual formation material, and opportunities for School Advisory Council members including the principal and the parish priest, around the core principles underpinning Catholic education.

Each school is responsible for a formation program for its council that is focused on the vision and mission of the school, its particular founders and patrons through their charism, and the school's connection to the wider Church through parish and diocese.

Each member brings to the formation process a willingness and openness reflective of their commitment to Catholic education in the parish and school. Formation aims to develop and enhance the qualities and skills needed by a council member, as outlined in Section 5 of the Terms of Reference.

Offered by MACS personnel	Offered by the school
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exploration of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – <i>MACS Statement of Mission</i> – <i>Working Together in Mission</i> • 'How to navigate' workshops on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Terms of Reference – <i>School Advisory Council Manual</i> • Renewal of School Advisory Council workshops • Annual visits to individual schools • Annual Archdiocesan School Advisory Council Mass • Visits to School Advisory Council meetings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflection on the mission of MACS • Participation in accreditation programs on the school charism • Working through the council's evaluation process • A day of reflection or annual retreat, if possible • Succession planning • Exploration of Catholic social teaching, including the preferential option for the poor as an expression of mission as lived out in the wider Church and its importance to Catholic schools

Parents and friends associations

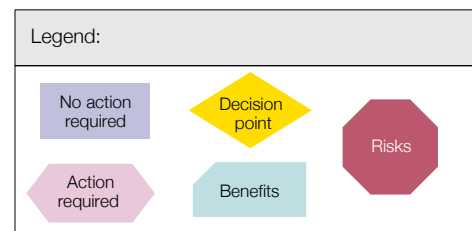
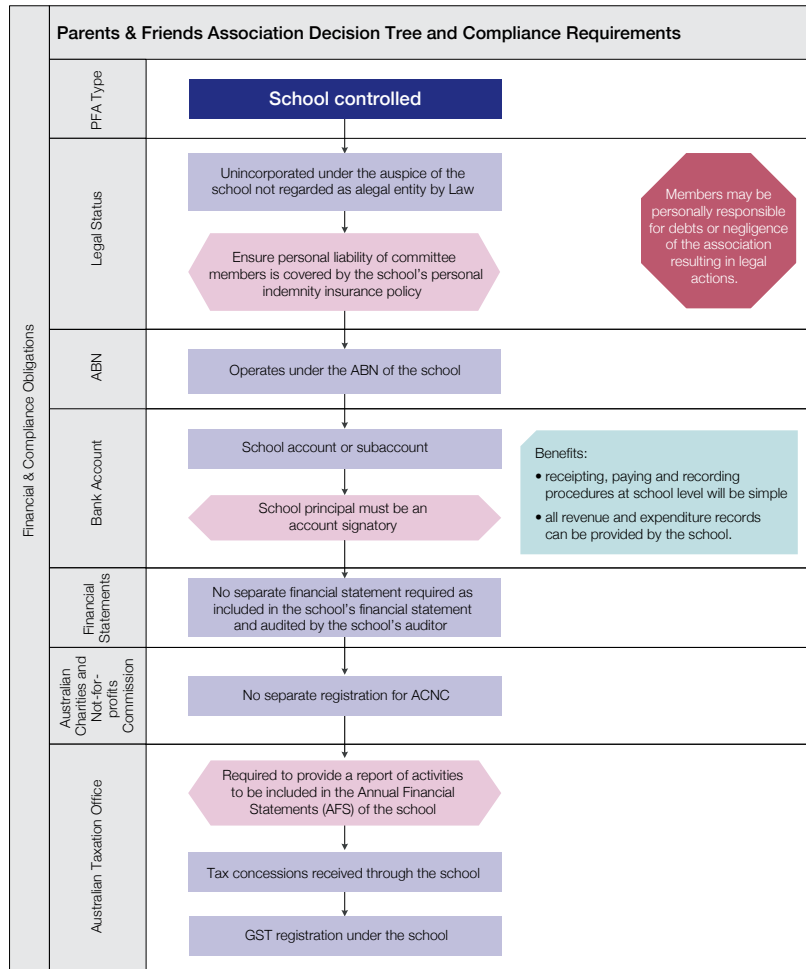
The role and operation of parents and friends associations within MACS schools is outlined in the MACS [Parents and Friends Policy](#).

'The Parents & Friends (P&F) exist for the benefit and general good of the school'.⁷ A parents and friends association recognises and values the role that parents play in the education of their children and aims to strengthen the partnership between family, school, parish and the wider community. They generally support the school by bringing the community together through organising fun activities for the children and families, while at the same time raising funds for the school through fetes, raffles, etc.

On the other hand, School Advisory Councils are advisory bodies established in schools as part of the MACS governance framework, working towards the strategy, vision and educational aims of the school. Therefore, it can be seen that a parents and friends association is not the same as a School Advisory Council, nor can it be a committee of the council, as each has a very different purpose.

MACS Parents and Friends Policy outlines the structure of a parents and friends association, financial procedures and is to be used in conjunction with the VCEA [Financial Compliance Obligations Guide](#) which captures the key financial compliance obligations applicable to parents and friends associations based on the structure of the specific association. MACS schools only operate school-controlled associations, so the financial and compliance requirements provided in the VCEA guide fall under model 2a. Thus, in MACS schools, the parents and friends financials must form part of the school's Annual Financial Statements, which are audited annually.

2a – Financial and compliance obligations for school controlled PFAs



⁷MACS [Parents and Friends Policy](#) on CEVN

Support documentation

The school is required to ensure that a dedicated School Advisory Council page on the school's website contains up-to-date versions of:

- the Terms of Reference
- the *School Advisory Council Manual*
- MACS Code of Conduct for School Advisory Council members
- the School Advisory Council Annual Report
- a list of council members and key roles
- a list of committees and membership.

To support a system-wide approach that encourages both solidarity and subsidiarity, the following documents provide a common approach to issues around establishment, membership and processes of School Advisory Councils.

Templates

As per other MACS templates, the documents below are to be contextualised for each school. Only highlighted text can be amended by a MACS school without the approval of the MACS Executive Director. Guidance notes and highlighted text are to be removed in the final version of the document.

MACS Terms of Reference for School Advisory Councils

This document provides the structure and scope of work for School Advisory Councils in all MACS schools. Arising from consultation during the establishment of MACS, it was affirmed that the presence of a School Advisory Council in each school is a living expression of the principle of subsidiarity in action and reflects the consultative nature of Catholic education. This is made explicit in the MACS School Advisory Council Terms of Reference, as defined by the MACS board and adapted to each school's local context. A [template](#) is provided for adaption to different contexts.

Appointment letter template

The [letter of appointment](#) details the expectations of council members and outlines the conditions of appointment, including:

- signing the school's Child Safety Code of Conduct
- undertaking a Working with Children Check as per the Worker Screening Act
- accepting the MACS Code of Conduct for School Advisory Council members
- attending induction and ongoing formation programs
- attending all School Advisory Council meetings.

Annual report template

The council's [annual report](#) is an important communication document and is to be drafted using the MACS-approved template.

Annual evaluation template

The School Advisory Council must undertake an [annual evaluation](#) to reflect upon its performance and areas for improvement using the MACS-approved template. While essentially an internal improvement process, for transparency's sake, a summary of the evaluation will be included in the School Advisory Council Annual Report submitted to the principal.

Committee terms of reference template

If a committee or working party is seen as desirable, the MACS-approved [Terms of Reference for Committees template](#) is to be used to establish clearly articulated expectations of the committee or working group. This template provides the structures that need to be adopted.

Support documentation (continued)

Suggested models

The following documents are models provided for principals to use during the transition period to support the establishment of School Advisory Councils in all MACS schools. They are not templates, but suggested models for communication.

Parent letter – transitioning to new councils

Suggested model [letter](#) to the parent community outlining the [establishment](#) of a new School Advisory Council.

Expression of interest

Suggested model request for members of the community to [express interest](#) in being part of the School Advisory Council.

Agenda and minutes

Suggested model meeting [agenda](#) and [minutes](#) with a focus on providing clear structures to support the work of the council.

Information handouts

These standalone documents can be used for both induction and formation to increase members' knowledge on various topics. They can also be shared with a wider audience. Rather than providing the information directly in the Manual, the handouts were designed to be accessed via links to keep the focus tight, save room and make them easily accessible.

School Advisory Council discernment process

This [handout](#) outlines the process for the parish priest and the principal to work collaboratively to ensure that the relationship between parish and school remains central to providing the religious leadership necessary for the success of the mission.

Establishing a School Advisory Council

This [handout](#) provides an outline of the suggested process from discernment to completing the Terms of Reference and establishing an online presence.

Agenda

Background information about the essential role of an [agenda](#).

Minutes

Background information and guidance on how to best capture in the [minutes](#) the activities and advice determined through council discussion and agreement by consensus.

Different governance arrangements, shared mission

Not all Catholic schools in the Archdiocese of Melbourne are MACS schools. This [handout](#) explains the difference between MACS schools and religious institute and ministerial public juridic person schools.

Role of the association of canonical administrators

The role of an association of canonical administrators associated with secondary schools has shifted from governance, but retains its primary pastoral role. This [handout](#) explains the important role and its connection with schools.



Policies and documentation

Foundational documents

These documents give shape and purpose to the work of School Advisory Councils.

School Governance Steering Committee Position Paper

The principal subject of this [Position Paper](#) was to determine the governance arrangements for the 292 schools owned by the Archdiocese, its parishes or associations of parishes. Included in its recommendations were the formation of MACS, the commissioning of *Working Together in Mission*, and the establishment of a School Advisory Council for each school to provide a forum for the realisation of transparency, accountability, consultation and participation.

MACS Constitution

The [constitution](#) details key aspects of the company's objectives, relationships, roles and responsibilities. Section 3: Objects includes the MACS Statement of Mission (see below). The constitution details the member's rights and reserve powers, and outlines the role of the board of directors to take responsibility for the fiduciary and strategic aspects of the company. It also defines the role of the executive director. The constitution creates checks and balances in the relationships between the layers of the company: from the member to the board and to management through the executive director.

MACS Statement of Mission

A key feature of the constitution, particularly in relation to School Advisory Councils, is the [Statement of Mission](#) that expresses the company's mission and purpose, and is designed to protect the catholicity of the company and the schools it governs.

Working Together in Mission

This [charter](#) outlines the roles and responsibilities of those who lead the shared work and mission of Catholic parishes and schools in the Archdiocese of Melbourne, especially principals, parish priests and School Advisory Councils. It is agreed to and endorsed by the Archbishop of Melbourne and the board of MACS.

Policies

The following policies apply in MACS school and are published on school websites. In each school, the policy available on the website may be contextualised by the school to outline school-based practices and processes used to implement the policy.

Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy – Schools

This policy demonstrates that MACS schools hold the care, safety and wellbeing of children and young people as a central and fundamental responsibility of our schools. MACS' commitment is drawn from and inherent to the teaching and mission of Jesus Christ, with love, justice and the sanctity of each human person at the heart of the gospel. The policy is contextualised by each school.

Child Safety Code of Conduct

The Child Safety Code of Conduct is one of the key strategies to promote child safety in MACS schools by fostering respectful and caring relationships among all members of the school community. It recognises the critical role that each member of the school community (including principals, employees, volunteers, contractors and clergy) plays in protecting and caring for children. The Code is an open and transparent acknowledgment of the shared values required to observe child-safe principles and expectations for appropriate behaviour towards and in the company of children.

Complaints Handling Policy – Schools

The Complaints Handling Policy arises from MACS' commitment to building school communities that feature positive and respectful relationships. Within each school, this policy celebrates that relationships are founded in the gospel values of justice, compassion, reconciliation and kindness. Such relationships support the learning and development of students and value the innate dignity of each person. It is important that each member of the community, including staff, parents and students, contributes to the building of the school community. The policy is contextualised by each school.

Enrolment Policy for MACS Schools

There is an agreed order of priority for enrolment in MACS schools, which must be followed in the enrolment policy and procedures. The first priority of Catholic schools is the provision of a Catholic education for Catholic children. While the majority of priorities remain the same, the order of priority alters slightly between primary and secondary schools to accommodate residents of designated priority parishes and other factors that impact on secondary education. Sacramental progress of children and liturgical attendance will always be significant when considering applications for enrolment. Please check the individual school's website for its enrolment policy.

Code of Conduct for School Advisory Council members

Acceptance of the MACS Code of Conduct for School Advisory Council members is a condition of appointment as outlined in the letter of appointment to any MACS school's School Advisory Council. The objective of this Code of Conduct is to ensure that high standards of community, group and individual behaviour are observed by members in the context of their roles as members of any School Advisory Council of a MACS school.

This Code builds upon the baseline expectation expressed in the school's Child Safety Code of Conduct that, like all members of the school community, council members 'are expected to actively contribute to a school culture by respecting the dignity of its members, affirming the gospel values of love, care for others, compassion and justice'.

MACS Conflict of Interest Policy

The purpose of this policy is to inform all involved with MACS of their obligations to disclose conflicts of interest in order to protect the integrity of MACS and manage risk. Principals are also aware that the management of related party transactions is covered under the MACS Related Party Transactions Policy included within the Financial Framework.

MACS Code of Conduct

This system wide policy reflecting MACS' commitment to a safe and nurturing environment for all MACS employees.

Our vision at MACS revolves around the transformative goal of 'forming lives to enrich the world'. This acknowledges that our work, actions and behaviours not only shape our immediate workplace, but also have a profound impact on the lives of individuals within our broader education community.

This Code of Conduct reflects our commitment to upholding the principles of faith, compassion and integrity that lie at the heart of our Catholic community. As stewards of this environment, it will serve to guide us as we navigate the complexities and challenges of our roles.

MACS support structures

MACS office support

As an expression of the principle of solidarity across the system, MACS provides support to School Advisory Councils, including policy guidance and templates for the work of the council. The MACS office assists schools by providing services which include:

- provision of print and online material
- assistance with the formation of new councils
- professional development for new chairs of councils
- advice and support to principals and parish priests as custodians of mission in relation to the role of the School Advisory Council in their particular setting
- advice and support to newly appointed principals in relation to the role of the School Advisory Council in their particular setting
- support for network and cluster activities.

The purpose of the School Advisory Councils Secretariat is to support principals and parish priests in their responsibilities related to strengthening the parish-

school community. The service provides them with resources and advice in working with existing School Advisory Councils and establishing new councils.

The specific formation requirements of individual councils are the responsibility of the relevant principal and parish priest as leaders of the parish-school community. To support formation within schools, a series of stakeholder group inductions will be offered by MACS personnel:

- principals and parish priests
- chairs – annually
- parents – annually to explore expressions of interest
- regional networks of chairs.

MACS personnel will also support schools through:

- visits to individual schools
- annual School Advisory Council Mass, commissioning and blessing resources.



Resources

These documents establish, support and maintain the work of the Terms of Reference and the Manual. They may be helpful to readers in engaging with the purpose of the School Advisory Council.

Related MACS policies

- School Advisory Council Policy (MACS website)
- Child Safety Code of Conduct (available from the school)
- Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy – Schools (available from the school)
- Complaints Handling Policy – Schools (available from the school)
- Enrolment Policy for MACS schools (available from the school)
- Conflict of Interest Policy
- Parents and Friends Policy
- Related Parties Policy
- Responsible Persons Policy

Legal and regulatory citations

- [*Education and Training Reform Regulations 2017*](#) (Vic.), Schedule 4 clause 16
- Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority (VRQA) [minimum standards](#)
- [*Worker Screening Act 2020*](#) (Vic.), Chapter 3
- [*Wrongs Act 1958*](#) (Vic.), section 37

Legacy documents

- [*Horizons of Hope Foundation Statement: Families as partners in Catholic school communities*](#)
- [School Governance Steering Committee Position Paper](#)

Foundation documents

- [Constitution – Melbourne Archdiocese Catholic Schools Ltd](#)
- [Statement of Mission](#) – MACS Constitution, clause 3.2
- [Working Together in Mission charter](#)

Terms of Reference

This [template](#) is to be shaped and contextualised for each school, and placed on the school website.

- [Handout – Tailoring of the Terms of Reference](#)

MACS templates

- [Template – Committee Terms of Reference](#)
- [Template – School Advisory Council Annual Report](#)
- [Template – School Advisory Council Appointment Letter](#)
- [Template – School Advisory Council Evaluation](#)

Suggested models

- [Suggested model – Letter to Parents for New School Advisory Council](#)
- [Suggested model – School Advisory Council Agenda](#)
- [Suggested model – School Advisory Council Expression of Interest](#)
- [Suggested model – School Advisory Council Minutes](#)

Support documents and information handouts

- [Handout – 10 Stages](#)
- [Handout – Agenda](#)
- [Handout – Commissioning and Blessing Ceremonies](#)
- [Handout – Discernment Process for School Advisory Councils](#)
- [Handout – Establishing a School Advisory Council](#)
- [Handout – Minutes](#)
- [Handout – Prayer at School Advisory Council Meetings](#)
- [Handout – Religious Institute and Ministerial Public Juridic Person Schools](#)
- [Handout – Role of an Association of Canonical Administrators](#)
- [MACS Code of Conduct for School Advisory Council members](#)
- [Working Together in Mission – Summary of Roles](#)
- [School Advisory Council Manual](#)

Shortened forms

DE (QARD): Department of Education (Quality Assessment and Regulation Division).

MACS: Melbourne Archdiocese Catholic Schools Ltd.

ToR: Terms of Reference, specifically the MACS School Advisory Council Terms of Reference, to be adapted for each MACS school's local context. The template contains guidance notes for principals.

VCEA: Victorian Catholic Education Authority Ltd.

VRQA: Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority.

WTiM: *Working Together in Mission*: Charter for parishes and schools in the Archdiocese of Melbourne.

Glossary

Agenda: Advance notice of items listed in order for discussion at a meeting.

Association of canonical administrators: A private juridic person in accordance with Canon 116, set up by a decree of the Archbishop and governed by a clearly defined set of statutes. The members are the parish priests, duly appointed to administer the member parishes as outlined in the statutes.

Canonical administrator: A priest who is assigned to administer a parish. Taken in the context of Catholic education in the Archdiocese of Melbourne, canonical administrators are the parish priests who collectively have the beneficial ownership of the land on which regional colleges operate.

Code of Canon Law: The system of laws and principles made and enforced by the hierarchical authorities of the Catholic Church to regulate its organisation.

Custodian of mission: A parish priest, priest moderator, parochial administrator, member of an association of canonical administrators or Archbishop's nominee who acts as custodian of the mission and patrimony of a MACS school. They have a duty to serve their school or college community by providing pastoral outreach to its families and students. For ease of use, custodian of mission will be referred to as 'parish priest' throughout.

Ecclesiastical authority: The authority which the Church has been given by Jesus to be exercised in his name in carrying out the mission entrusted to it.

Education and Training Reform Regulations 2017 (Vic.): Regulations made under the *Education and Training Reform Act 2006* (Vic.) that prescribe matters relating to education, specifically registration of education and training organisations (including minimum standards for senior secondary courses and criteria for registration).

Ex officio: A member who is appointed by virtue of their position.

Glossary (continued)

Executive Director: The Executive Director is appointed by the MACS board to manage the operation of the schools in accordance with the strategic plan developed under the board's direction.

Fiduciary: Responsibility of all for the duty of care, duty of loyalty and duty of obedience to the organisation and its members.

Formation: The process of ongoing learning and understanding of the ethos and spirit of a Catholic school, and the collective and individual role each member plays in the development of the School Advisory Council.

Induction: The formal, structured and supportive method of introducing council members to the School Advisory Council and MACS. Through their reading of the key documents, it is expected that members will understand the purpose of a School Advisory Council and each person's role in pursuing that purpose.

MACS board: Body responsible for the governance and operation of the 293 schools.

Manual: The *School Advisory Council Manual* is written as a guide for the people in each community who have agreed to work together to accomplish the shared conviction that all need to be working together in mission.

Melbourne Archdiocese Catholic Schools Ltd: MACS is a reference to Melbourne Archdiocese Catholic Schools Ltd, and/or its subsidiaries, MACSS and/or MACSEYE (as the context requires).

Minutes: A record of discussion and agreement by consensus at a meeting and the follow-up required.

Mission: 'As Christians we are all involved in varying ways in the one mission: to bring about the fullness of life for all peoples in all places and times as Jesus ardently desired'. The MACS Statement of Mission is an expression of this mission within the framework of a Catholic school in the Archdiocese of Melbourne.

Parent voice: A platform provided to parents to enable them to speak on behalf of their children's quality of education.

Parish priest: For ease of use throughout, reference to 'parish priest' will include priest moderator, parochial administrator, member of an association of canonical administrators or Archbishop's nominee, including their role as custodian of mission.

Position Paper: The 2020 document presenting the argument for the transfer of governance of the schools to MACS.

Solidarity: Unity of action between people who have a common interest or goal.

Statement of Mission: Foundational statement about the missionary aspect of a Catholic school within the Archdiocese of Melbourne: 'Catholic schooling seeks to provide the young with the best kind of education possible, one that fosters a formation of the whole person that is deeply and enduringly humanising.'

Steering Committee: The committee established by the Archbishop to transfer the governance of the schools to MACS by 1 January 2021.

Subsidiarity: Principle indicating that a central authority should perform only those tasks which cannot be performed at a more local level.

Succession planning: A strategy for the preparation and passing on of leadership roles.

Terms of Reference: The document which articulates the scope of work for School Advisory Councils and how the members will work together.

Victorian Catholic Education Authority Ltd: The overarching strategic planning and policy-making body for Catholic schools in Victoria.

Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority: The Victorian Government's education and training regulator that ensures quality in education and training.

Working Together in Mission: The document that outlines the roles and responsibilities of those who lead the shared work and mission of Catholic parishes and schools in the Archdiocese of Melbourne, especially principals, parish priests and School Advisory Councils.



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APPENDICES



MACS Code of Conduct for School Advisory Council members

Members of School Advisory Councils in all Melbourne Archdiocese Catholic Schools (MACS) schools should meet high standards of community, group and individual behaviour, and appreciate, value and share the educational mission and ethos of the Catholic Church.

They are therefore expected to:

- acknowledge that MACS schools operate as part of the educational mission of the Catholic Church and work within that understanding
- develop a deeper understanding of, and commitment to, the mission of Catholic education and promote it within the relevant community
- acknowledge and undertake to fulfill the conditions in the letter of appointment
- engage in continuing formation and education about the responsibilities of School Advisory Council members
- undertake to engage with and understand the Terms of Reference
- familiarise themselves with the contents of the *School Advisory Council Manual*, the foundational documents, and the essential MACS and school policies
- undertake the reading and preparation required for each meeting
- undertake School Advisory Council committee work as required
- act in good faith, care and diligence, placing the interests of the school above their own interests
- keep an open mind and be willing to enter into dialogue by being aware of alternative solutions
- demonstrate solidarity by being attentive to School Advisory Council processes of consultation, discussion, discernment and consensus, leading to a final recommendation
- respect the confidentiality of School Advisory Council matters and not misuse information or their position
- exclude themselves from making public statements on any matter which could be perceived as reflecting the position of the school. Such public statements will be made by the principal or MACS Executive Director
- maintain clarity between the advisory role of the School Advisory Council and the governing role of the MACS board
- understand they are not involved in the day-to-day management of the school
- declare any perceived conflict of interest and consult with the chair regarding possible implications, prior to any in-meeting discussion
- support colleagues on the School Advisory Council through reflection, prayer, and courteous and warm relationships
- protect the good name and reputation of the parish, the school and its community, the School Advisory Council and MACS.

Failure to comply with this Code of Conduct could result in removal from the council.



Introduction

Aquinas College is a school which operates with the consent of the Catholic Archbishop of Melbourne and is owned, operated and governed by Melbourne Archdiocese Catholic Schools Ltd (MACS).

1. Purpose of the School Advisory Council

The MACS board has responsibility for the strategic direction and oversight of the operation and management of MACS schools, including Aquinas College. Clear lines of authority, reporting and delegation from the MACS board through the Executive Director delegate the day-to-day operational management of Aquinas College to its principal.

In keeping with the objects of the MACS Constitution, which states 'The good work of educating the young, undertaken in the light of the Gospel, is a co-responsible task undertaken by every member of the Catholic school community' (p. 3), the School Advisory Council provides a crucial point of connection between the wider school community and school leaders. While the School Advisory Council does not have governance responsibility or decision-making authority, it supports the principal and school leadership and provides an important connection to the parish.

The School Advisory Council's role, as determined by the MACS board through this Terms of Reference, supports the overall governance of MACS schools as it 'is to give consideration to, and advice on, important school matters in order to support the principal and the strategic interest of the school' (*Working Together in Mission* p. 18).

2. Role of the School Advisory Council

Advisory in nature

The School Advisory Council provides a forum for discussion and discernment, where parent¹ voice and community perspective are available to inform and support the decisions made by the principal and parish priest as the custodian of mission for the good of school and parish where students' wellbeing and outcomes are paramount.

When used in this document, the term 'parish priest' will include priest moderator, parochial administrator, member of an association of canonical administrators or Archbishop's nominee across primary or secondary contexts and designates their specific role in relation to schools and their title in reference to their ex-officio duties on a School Advisory Council, including their role as custodian of mission.

It is important that School Advisory Council members understand that their primary role is to provide assistance and advice on school matters to support the principal in their leadership role. School Advisory Councils do not have a legal identity and do not become involved in the day-to-day management of the school. The School Advisory Council must act within the parameters of this Terms of Reference.

¹ The terms 'parent' and 'family' are used interchangeably and refer to any adult caregiver (or group of caregivers) who plays a primary role in a child's cognitive, social and emotional development, including persons/people with parental responsibility such as legal guardians and carers, grandparents, foster parents and extended family members.

The MACS board, as the governing body of MACS schools, is responsible for the common good of Catholic education in MACS schools in the Archdiocese, and thus is ultimately responsible for making any decision about the establishment of a council and its arrangements.

The following are some examples of the many ways the School Advisory Council may support the school and the principal:

- articulating and enacting the school's vision and mission
- promoting the school's Catholic ethos and culture
- promoting faith formation and development
- supporting school policies as required
- giving advice to the principal on issues such as school improvement plans and enrolment trends
- engaging in discussion with the principal about the annual school budget and other financial matters
- giving advice to the principal about the school master plan
- providing capital resource planning and maintenance support to the principal.

3. Council structure

Serving on the School Advisory Council of a Catholic school is a form of Church lay ministry. It is a response to the call to support the local Catholic parish and school communities in a particular way. It is also a means for members of our community to share their skills and talents for the common good. A well-functioning council provides rich sources of wisdom and insight, as well as a means of strengthening community links and potential for partnerships.

The Aquinas College School Advisory Council is to be made up of a minimum of six and a recommended maximum of 10 council members who value and share the educational mission and ethos of the Catholic Church, comprising at least:

- (a) the principal (ex officio)
- (b)* the parish priest nominated to represent the association of canonical administrators related to the school (ex officio) (custodian of mission)
- c) two parents of children attending the school
- d) one parishioner
- e) another person who in the opinion of the principal has the relevant knowledge, skills, expertise or interest and commitment to the mission of the school to serve a particular need on the council

Additional members up to the recommended maximum of ten (10) members may, according to local need, include:

- f) additional parents of children attending the school
- g) additional parishioners
- h) alumni representative
- i) any other person who in the opinion of the principal has the relevant knowledge, skills, expertise or interest and commitment to the mission of the school
- j) business manager – secondary only (ex officio)
- k) student representative – secondary only (ex officio).

A person who is a member of the council under any category from (a) to (e) may satisfy the eligibility criteria under more than one category.

At the principal's discretion, members of the school staff may be invited from time to time to attend meetings depending on the content of the agenda.

4. Appointment and induction of members

A process of discernment

As being a member of a School Advisory Council of a Catholic school is a form of Church lay ministry, the process of appointment is preceded by discernment to assist potential new council members to understand:

- the vision and mission of MACS, the parish and school
- the roles, responsibilities and processes of MACS and the Aquinas College School Advisory Council
- how council members can support the principal and the parish priest
- the appropriateness of their personal readiness to serve.

This discernment process commences when expressions of interest are sought for new council members, beginning with the provision of an information pack to those interested in nominating for a council position, or a chance for potential nominees to discuss the role of the council and the expectations of a council member with the principal, chair or parish priest.

In keeping with what it means to be and to build Church, the discernment process seeks to arrive at a decision about appointment which all can accept gracefully and support wholeheartedly (even if some wish the decision had been different) because they know the group honestly searched together for the Spirit of God in and for the life of the community.

A discernment process ensures that those who have expressed an interest have had an opportunity to discern their readiness to serve. This process at Aquinas College includes:

- reflecting on the mission of MACS and the school
- exploring the shared understanding that serving on the School Advisory Council is a means for members of our community to share their skills and talents for the common good
- interviewing those who submitted an expression of interest
- sharing known background information about the potential members – with observance of privacy laws and confidentiality
- considering the good character of the person and their disposition
- guaranteeing a balance of gender, cultural diversity and skill sets on the School Advisory Council.

Process for the appointment of council members

The principal has the power of appointment, reappointment and removal of members of the School Advisory Council, except the parish priest who holds office *ex officio* and cannot be removed by the principal.

In appointing council members, the principal will consult with the parish priest following a process of discernment. The principal and parish priest may choose to be supported by others in the appointment process. When appointments are being made, it is important to keep in mind the need for a balance of gender, cultural diversity and skill sets in forming the council.

Council members are appointed annually at a set time devised by the council. The principal may, in consultation with the parish priest, at any time make an additional appointment to the council in the event of a vacancy in the minimum prescribed positions or to otherwise fulfil a need on the council; however, any council member so appointed will only hold office until the next set annual appointment round devised by the council following the appointment and, at this time, may apply for membership of the council in the ordinary manner. Preference will be given to new appointees over a repeat nominee (someone who has previously been on the council, had leave and returned) to ensure ongoing diversity and renewal.

Key considerations in appointment of council members

Child Safe Standards

Adherence to the school's Child Safe Standards must be at the forefront of any appointment process. As a condition of appointment, council members must have a Working with Children Check, and sign and comply with the school's Child Safety Code of Conduct.

Code of Conduct for School Advisory Council members

The school's Child Safety Code of Conduct sets up the baseline expectation that, like all members of the school community, council members 'are expected to actively contribute to a school culture by respecting the dignity of its members, affirming the gospel values of love, care for others, compassion and justice'.

This baseline standard is expanded and made explicit in the MACS Code of Conduct for School Advisory Council members. The objective of this Code of Conduct is to ensure that high standards of community, group and individual behaviour are observed by the members in the context of their roles as members of any School Advisory Council of a MACS school.

Conflict of interest

MACS is committed to building School Advisory Councils that are free from fraud or corruption, or the perception of fraud or corruption. Conflict of interest arises where a councillor's duty to the school is affected by a personal (actual, potential or perceived) interest. In such cases, the line between personal and professional conduct may become blurred and interfere with a councillor's capacity to provide advice and fulfil their responsibilities on the council. Conflicts of interest may arise, but do not need to present a problem to any School Advisory Council or MACS if they are openly and effectively managed.

The MACS Conflict of Interest Policy for Employees, Contractors and Consultants addresses the requirements for disclosure and management of conflicts of interest and extends to council members and all members of any committees of the council. It is a requirement of the role that council and committee members abide by and comply with this policy.

Diversity

The School Advisory Council seeks to be inclusive of all community members and will demonstrate a genuine commitment to gender equity, cultural diversity and requisite skill sets.

Collectively, council members should bring a range of personal skills and experience to add value to the Aquinas College School Advisory Council in accordance with the requirements under Section 5: The role of individual council members in this Terms of Reference.

Expressions of interest

Generally, expressions of interest in becoming a council member are made in advance of the set annual appointment round devised by the council. The process of applying for membership of the Aquinas College School Advisory Council is to publicise vacancies in *The Lighthouse* (school newsletter), with prospective members to provide a written application to be followed by an interview with the principal. Anyone interested in becoming a member of the Aquinas College School Advisory Council may seek advice from the principal, chair or parish priest on the process of appointment. Consideration will also be given to succession planning through staggered renewal of members to ensure continuing institutional memory.

Terms and conditions of appointment

The period of appointment for council members, excepting the parish priest, the principal and any other ex-officio appointment, is generally a term of two years ending on the conclusion of the second year following their appointment, with the option of being reappointed for a total of three consecutive terms.

The parish priest and the principal hold office on the School Advisory Council ex officio, meaning that their term continues for as long as they occupy that office following which they cease to be a member of the council. Their successor in that office then becomes automatically appointed to the council.

Any other council members who are appointed on the council ex officio due to a specific position in the school (for example, a business manager) will also have a term of office on the council for as long as they occupy that office, following which they cease to be a member of the council. Their successor in that office will be eligible to be appointed to the council, as determined by the principal in consultation with the parish priest.

The other terms and conditions of appointment of council members are contained in a letter of appointment from the principal and parish priest. A condition of appointment is that the member will:

- sign the school's Child Safety Code of Conduct
- undertake a Working with Children Check as per the *Worker Screening Act 2020* (Vic.)
- accept the MACS Code of Conduct for School Advisory Council members.

The letter of appointment, in a template provided by MACS, sets out among other things:

- terms and conditions that must be agreed to by the proposed council member
- details of expectations of council members
- a copy of this Terms of Reference
- a copy of the MACS Code of Conduct for School Advisory Council members
- reference to availability of applicable MACS school governance policies, as provided in the *MACS School Advisory Council Manual*, including the applicable school's Child Safety Policy, Child Safety Code of Conduct, Complaints Handling Policy and the Conflict of Interest Policy.

The office of a council member will become vacant if the member:

- is absent without the consent of the council from three successive meetings of the council, unless the principal determines otherwise
- resigns by notice in writing
- is removed from office by the principal (or the Executive Director or board, as applicable)
- ceases to occupy the relevant office, in the case of the parish priest, the principal or any other ex-officio appointment to the council
- is unable to perform the role due to ill health.

Any period of office of a council member held during a casual vacancy appointment by the principal (that is, a period of less than one year between annual appointment rounds) is disregarded in counting the maximum permitted tenure of office of a council member of three consecutive terms.

Induction

The induction process continues after appointment and is a continuing process rather than an event. MACS provides a basis for formation and induction as outlined in the *School Advisory Council Manual*. Formal induction to the Aquinas College School Advisory Council includes:

- introductory meeting with Principal including provision of MACS School Advisory Council Manual and tour of school facilities
- introduction of new members to school community in The Lighthouse
- welcome meeting with Aquinas College School Advisory Council Chair
- annual formation seminar.

New council members will be provided with:

- the MACS *Statement of Mission*
- an understanding of the history of the parish and school
- a MACS *School Advisory Council Manual*, including the school's Child Safety Code of Conduct, the MACS Conflict of Interest Policy, and other relevant school governance policies
- an opportunity to meet with the principal and parish priest
- a tour of the school facilities.

Process of removal of council members

The principal may, following consultation with the parish priest, remove a council member (except the custodian of mission) if the principal is of the view that a council member is not complying with the expectations of the role of a council member, or is engaged in conduct unbecoming of a council member or prejudicial to the interests of the school. The reasons for removal of council members will be outlined in writing by the principal, in consultation with the parish priest.

A council member may appeal their removal to the Executive Director for review. The decision of the Executive Director will be final.

The principal of Aquinas College acts on delegation by the Executive Director, who in turn acts on delegations from the MACS board. No delegation of power prevents the exercise of a power directly by the Executive Director or the MACS board, as relevant. For the avoidance of doubt, the Executive Director and board reserve the power to remove a council member from office (except the custodian of mission) if they are of an opinion that the circumstances are deserving of such action.

5. Role of the individual council members

Qualities and skills of a council member

Each Catholic school is different, but all schools share the mission of the Church. The council should be composed of people who meet high standards of community, group and individual behaviour, and appreciate, value and share the educational mission and ethos of the Catholic Church. When seeking council members, it is important to reflect on the qualities and skills of benefit to the council in carrying out its functions. Their capacity to contribute, their shared understanding and their positivity are essential.

The following is a list of some of the key qualities and skills for members of the School Advisory Council:

- commitment to the MACS *Statement of Mission*
- commitment to Catholic education in the parish and school
- commitment to the vision and mission of the parish and school
- understanding of the role of parish priest as the custodian of mission, principal as the leader of the school and council members
- willingness to ask questions and seek clarification
- ability to think strategically
- willingness to support the contributions of other council members
- capacity to listen in an active and meaningful way
- willingness to work cooperatively with others
- commitment to always maintaining confidentiality.

Expectations of the council member

Each council member, in addition to terms and conditions of appointment of council members contained in their letter of appointment and their acceptance of the MACS Code of Conduct for School Advisory Council members, is required to commit to the following:

- understanding the council's role
- having a positive and constructive attitude
- elevating any appropriate issues for consideration by the council
- declaring and not allowing any personal interests to conflict with the interests of the school, and properly managing any conflict of interest in accordance with the MACS Conflict of Interest Policy
- preparing for council meetings
- attending each council meeting, unless there are extenuating circumstances

- bringing expertise and views to discussions on behalf of the whole community
- participating actively and responsibly
- acting honestly and fairly, in good faith and in the best interests of the school
- acting ethically and with a high level of integrity
- conducting themselves professionally and treating other council members fairly, sensitively, consistently and with respect

6. Key roles

There are four key roles on a School Advisory Council. The chair, the principal, the parish priest and the secretary each have a significant role on the council and each of these roles carries specific responsibilities.

The chair

The role of the chair is to:

- chair council meetings
- in conjunction with the principal and the secretary, oversee the development of meeting agendas, and check papers for meetings and the draft minutes
- ensure the meetings are focused on the agenda
- encourage participation by all council members in meetings and at council events
- act as a spokesperson for the council when authorised to do so by the principal
- attend important parish and school events as appropriate
- in conjunction with the principal, oversee the preparation of the council's annual report, with the final version approved by the council
- participate as a member of the council.

Appointment

The chair is appointed by the principal through either, depending on local context, discernment of the will of the council in consultation with the parish priest or, after a process of discernment, election by the council members from among their number. This would take place at the first meeting of the council after the end of the term of the previous chair.

The chair will normally be an independent member who is not employed by MACS at the school or otherwise and is selected based on the person's skills, competencies and their record as a leader.

The term of the chair aligns with their term of office as a council member. The office of the chair will terminate if they cease to be a council member whether by way of expiry of their term, resignation or removal. The chair does not have a casting vote in addition to their ordinary vote as a council member.

The principal

Key responsibilities of the principal's role include development of the faith community, particular focus on the safety and wellbeing of students, formulation of a vision for the whole school, attention to contemporary teaching and learning to engage all students, and stewardship of the people and resources with particular outreach to the parent community.

The principal works in collaboration with the parish priest, staff and members of the school community, and MACS management to achieve the mission of the school.

As such, the principal's role on the council as an ex-officio member is to:

- play a key role in developing the overall goals and priorities of the council
- play a key role in developing the agenda for meetings and the preparation of papers before meetings

- ensure follow-up of actions arising from council meetings
- act as the chief education adviser to the council
- make arrangements to maintain an archive of relevant council documentation in accordance with this Terms of Reference, including minutes from previous meetings
- make arrangements to distribute the papers before meetings, after preparation of the papers by the secretary
- in conjunction with the chair, assist in the preparation of the council's annual report
- make arrangements to distribute draft minutes to the council members, after preparation by the secretary
- ensure that council members are kept informed between meetings
- make arrangements to maintain a register and record of council, committee and working groups, and all applicable documentation and records, including minutes, agendas and correspondence.

Appointment

The principal is an ex-officio member of the School Advisory Council by virtue of holding the role of principal of the school. A duly appointed acting principal will fulfil this role during the absence of the principal. The principal has full voting rights and is counted in the usual way for quorum purposes.

The parish priest

The parish priest as the custodian of mission has a key role of supporting the school in its distinctive Catholic identity, spirituality and life by continued responsibility for faith education, sacramental life and pastoral care.

Therefore, the parish priest has an ex-officio role on the council to:

- as the key evangeliser and educator in faith within the parish and thus the custodian of mission of parish and school, provide guidance to council in its deliberations as relevant
- support the principal and council in the development and implementation of the sacramental program to ensure the school is faithful to its distinctive Catholic identity and spirituality
- in providing strong pastoral support and effective Catholic leadership of the parish, which includes the school and college communities, guide the council and bring to the council's attention matters relevant to the operation of the school
- be engaged with, and bring to the council's attention, those aspects of the school's operations that have the potential to harm the parish's good name
- be involved in and provide input to the council's planning of any transaction that will change the nature of the school property or affect the use of any other areas of adjoining parish property (where property is beneficially owned by a juridic person which the custodian of mission represents, i.e. a parish or groups of parishes).

Appointment

The parish priest as the custodian of mission has an automatic entitlement to hold office on the council ex officio by virtue of their office as parish priest, parish priest representative of an association of parishes or nominee of the Archbishop, as applicable. The parish priest has full voting rights and is counted in the usual way for quorum purposes.

The secretary

The role of the secretary is to:

- take the minutes of council meetings
- oversee that the agenda and papers are confirmed in sufficient time to allow for their distribution at least a week prior to the meeting
- oversee management of all council correspondence
- oversee the provision of adequate notice of the annual appointment round and of any intention to call for nominations for council positions that become vacant.

Appointment

A minute secretary may be appointed by the principal from the staff of the school to undertake the duties of secretary. The minute secretary would have no vote as their role is purely administrative. Alternatively, a secretary is appointed by the council from among its members at the first meeting of the council after the end of the term of the previous secretary. If appointed from within the ranks of the council, the secretary does not have an additional vote as well as their ordinary vote on the council.

7. Committees and working parties

To share and support the work of the School Advisory Council, the council may consider establishing standing committees depending on the size and local context of the school. The purpose of each committee is to advise the School Advisory Council on specific matters. Committees are not a requirement, but an additional advisory structure if needed.

The councils of larger schools may delegate work to committees to provide advice more effectively on complex or specialised issues, and to use councillors' time more efficiently. Committees provide recommendations to the full council, which retains collective responsibility for the advice provided to the principal.

Involvement in committees allows members to deepen their knowledge of the school, become more actively engaged and fully utilise their experience. Additionally, the existence of committees can indicate to the community that the council is giving voice to issues.

Smaller schools may not benefit from a formal committee structure because their councils are often quite small and operations not as complex.

From time to time, the council may also wish to establish a committee or working party for a specific purpose or to undertake a particular task, for example a centenary celebration.

The council may appoint additional members of a council committee or working group to assist with deliberations in the manner determined by the council in each instance. Any co-opted members of committees who are not council members will be held to account to the same expectations as those of a council member, as outlined in Section 5. They must have a Working with Children Check, sign and comply with the school's Child Safety Code of Conduct, accept the MACS Code of Conduct for School Advisory Council members and the MACS Conflict of Interest Policy for Employees, Contractors and Consultants.

Council committees and working groups may be focused on a specific area such as:

- finance
- property
- parent engagement.

Function

If a committee or working party is seen as desirable, the MACS-approved School Advisory Council Committee Terms of Reference template is to be used to establish the committee or working group. The following structures need to be adopted:

- Each committee or working party should be chaired by a council member who is responsible for reporting to the council on the activities of the committee/working party.
- Council committees/working parties are directly responsible to the council.
- Each committee/working party of the council should have clearly articulated expectations stating:
 - the name of the committee/working party
 - the name of the chair
 - the purpose and tasks to be undertaken
 - the names of the members

- the quorum, meeting and reporting requirements
- the date for reporting back to the council, e.g. actions since last report, what's happening now, future plans, items for council discussion
- the duration of the committee/working party.

It is important that any council committee or working party understands that it may not speak publicly for the council.

The terms of reference for each committee or working party of the council should be approved by the principal and appropriate records maintained by or on behalf of the principal.

A summary of the activities of each committee or working party should be included in the council's annual report to acknowledge the specific work undertaken by the committee or working party during the year.

8. School advisory council meetings

The Aquinas College School Advisory Council meets at least once a term with a maximum of seven meetings during the year, the annual School Advisory Council Seminar being one of these scheduled meetings.

The School Advisory Council may call extraordinary meetings if required.

Agendas should be prepared and distributed prior to each meeting, with sufficient notice and time for preparation by council members. Minutes will be taken at each meeting.

To support the parish priest in maintaining a presence on our School Advisory Council, given that the parish priest has multiple schools to support, they would only be required to attend a minimum of one meeting per semester. The principal will meet at least once per term with the parish priest to discuss School Advisory Council business.

If the parish priest cannot be present at a scheduled meeting, they would inform the chair or principal of their inability to attend and share any reports or information prior to the meeting's commencement.

Quorum

A quorum must be always present at each council meeting for the meeting to be validly constituted, and all discussion and agreement by consensus made at the meeting valid. The quorum for meetings is two-thirds of the total number of council members at any given time. The principal should always be part of the quorum.

Conduct of council meetings – consensus and confidentiality

In the conduct of School Advisory Council meetings, it is important that conversations are encouraged. Good, healthy dialogue where members listen to each other creates positive connections and builds good relationships, enabling the council to explore ideas and proposals.

Equally important is that members enter the meeting well-prepared for the discussions that will take place. An agenda will have been circulated prior to the meeting, and any important proposal will have been highlighted and any relevant documentation circulated. This will provide an opportunity for informed dialogue to take place, rather than 'off the cuff' thinking.

It is hoped that a well-informed discussion where each person has a chance to speak, is listened to intently and feels their ideas have been respected will lead to proposals and ideas being agreed to by consensus. At the heart of an agreement by consensus is the ongoing welfare of the group and good relationships of the members appropriate to a Catholic School Advisory Council.

Council confidentiality and solidarity are key ingredients in building trust at council meetings. As a general rule, all council meeting proceedings are confidential. At times, there may be occasion to formally declare an issue, a paper or a discussion as particularly sensitive and confidential. This

should be done by the chair prior to a council meeting and confirmed before the close of the meeting.

Council members must respect the right of individuals to express their views freely at council meetings without fear of being named outside the meetings as taking particular positions. As in all similar groups, a sense of trust among council members is vital for the wellbeing of the council.

A meeting should close by reviewing actions and deadlines set and noting of the details of the next meeting.

Disclosure of interests by council, committee and working group members

In accordance with the Conflict of Interest Policy, all council members must disclose any personal interest which relates, or may relate, to the operations of the school to ensure that any actual, potential or perceived conflict of interest with a duty that the person has on the council is identified and appropriately managed.

The Conflict of Interest Policy must always be complied with by all members of the council, and the members of any committee or working group established by the council.

9. Engaging with the school community

The council encourages full participation of stakeholders to ensure a high level of engagement and participation by the school community. Schools must employ a variety of strategies to provide evidence to meet Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority (VRQA) minimum standards, which require a school to 'publish a clear statement of its philosophy and be able to demonstrate how the school's philosophy is enacted' per Schedule 4 clause 16 in the *Education and Training Reform Regulations 2017* (Vic.).

The School Advisory Council is required to ensure that it has a dedicated page on the school's website which publishes up-to-date versions of:

- the Terms of Reference
- *MACS School Advisory Council Manual*
- MACS Code of Conduct for School Advisory Council members
- the School Advisory Council Annual Report
- a list of council members and key roles
- a list of committees and membership.

A key piece of evidence that could demonstrate how the school's philosophy is enacted is the School Advisory Council Annual Report. The School Advisory Council Annual Report is an important communication document and is to be drafted using the MACS-approved template. Preparation of the council's annual report is to be overseen by the chair, in conjunction with the principal, with the final version approved by the council. The council's annual report should acknowledge the activities, achievements and challenges of the council and committees over the past year, reference the council's self-evaluation, and indicate goals and focus for the following year. In turn, these goals will provide a basis for the evaluation the council undertakes in the following year.

This report is to be submitted to the principal and shared with the school community. It may also be used to inform the principal's requisite School Annual Report published on the school website and the VRQA State Register unless otherwise determined by the Executive Director, either generally or in any instance.

The School Advisory Council is required to ensure that its dedicated webpage is reviewed and updated annually. The *MACS School Advisory Council Manual* provides information to support and guide the work of School Advisory Councils.

10. Record keeping

As a minimum, the principal must ensure the maintenance of the following council documents and records:

- the school's School Advisory Council Terms of Reference (this document) and the terms of reference of any committee or working group established by the council
- the agenda and minutes of School Advisory Council, committee and working group meetings
- copies of each School Advisory Council Annual Report
- a register of the current members of the council, committees and working groups, and any council members holding key roles
- a register of interests disclosed by council, committee and working group members
- the School Advisory Council correspondence file.

Agenda and minutes

The minutes of council meetings must be recorded in a consistent format and maintained by the principal in a minute book or another appropriate archive system at the school.

Minutes of meetings should be distributed as soon as possible after the meeting to allow sufficient time for action items to be followed up between meetings.

The minutes should be approved by the council at its next meeting, as an accurate record of the meeting.

Council minutes are not public documents. A brief report approved by the principal may appear in the school and parish newsletters to communicate the work of the council to the community.

Publication of this Terms of Reference

An up-to-date version of the Terms of Reference must be always available on the school's website.

11. Evaluating the work of the council

The School Advisory Council must undertake an annual evaluation to reflect upon its performance and areas for improvement.

The council must agree the process to be followed each year based on a MACS template. The principal will appoint a council member to oversee the evaluation process and, if appropriate, take a leadership role in implementing the findings. Each year, the council should consider whether any improvements to its operation or this Terms of Reference should be recommended to MACS. While essentially an internal self-improvement process, for transparency's sake, a summary of the evaluation will be included in the School Advisory Council Annual Report submitted to the principal.

The council may determine to evaluate all aspects of its work or concentrate on some key areas.

Areas for evaluation may include:

- council processes such as meeting procedures, planning and communication
- the work of committees or working groups
- the nature and extent of involvement of the parish and school communities
- involvement in or assistance on key parish or school projects.

Definitions

Conflict of interest

A conflict of interest arises where an individual's personal interest conflicts with their responsibility to act in the best interests of MACS or its subsidiaries, MACSS and MACSEYE, as the context requires.

Melbourne Catholic Archdiocese Schools Ltd (MACS)

MACS is a reference to Melbourne Archdiocese Catholic Schools Ltd, and / or its subsidiaries, MACSS and/or MACSEYE (as the context requires).

MACS school or school

A school which operates with the consent of the Catholic Archbishop of Melbourne and is owned, operated and governed by MACS, directly or through MACSS (as the context requires). References to schools or MACS schools also includes boarding premises of schools operated by MACS and specialist schools operated by MACSS.

School Advisory Council

Supports the principal of a MACS school by providing a forum for discussion and discernment where parent voice and community perspective can help inform decision-making.

Volunteer

A person who performs work without remuneration or reward for MACS, a MACS school or MACSEYE service (as the context requires) in the school/service environment.

Related policies and documents

Related MACS policies and documents

Working Together in Mission
School Advisory Council Manual
Code of Conduct for MACS

Policy information

Responsible director	Director, Catholic Mission and Identity
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Working Together in Mission



Melbourne Archdiocese
Catholic Schools



Charter for parishes and schools
in the Archdiocese of Melbourne

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St Mary's College, Seymour
St Patrick's School, Mentone
St Patrick's School, Murrumbena
St Pius X School, Heidelberg West

Foreword

A message from the Archbishop

Since the earliest days of the Church's mission in Melbourne, the task of providing an education for the children and young people of our families has been a privilege and a joy, as well as a witness of tremendous faith. The inspired pledge to provide schooling experience for every child seeking a Catholic education is a renewed work of evangelisation in our own time, carrying forward the legacy of primary and secondary schools in parishes across our Archdiocese.

Countless endeavours of sheer hard work have shared light and wisdom through the evangelical witness of teachers who were committed to providing the best for their students. Young learners from an array of cultural, ethnic, social, economic and linguistic backgrounds have found the Catholic classroom to be a place of knowledge and hospitality, and the Lord has blessed this great effort of previous generations.

In this proud history, and in the work ahead, we build school communities in which the Holy Spirit breathes life and wisdom liberally, and in which that same Spirit inspires new energy for learning the art of wisdom and growing in knowledge and understanding.

In the schools for which the Archdiocese has a particular responsibility, those governed by Melbourne Archdiocese Catholic Schools Ltd (MACS), I am mindful of the great responsibility we have to honour such a legacy and to protect it in the years ahead. In particular, I would like to recognise here the wonderful contribution of the countless number of priests and consecrated religious, assisted in more recent times by many lay people, who have enriched the provision



of Catholic education in the Archdiocese with the many charisms of the founders of their respective religious institutes. The devotion and commitment of their whole lives to the education of the students of our schools have left us a witness that we can follow in the generations to come.

Prayerfully, humbly, but boldly, we pick up what earlier pioneers have built and we shape it so that it will continue to serve the people of Melbourne with integrity.

We live through a time of great challenge and opportunity in the work of Catholic schooling, and the next chapter of its story will require a diligence from every leader in the Catholic community. In particular, strong leadership is required from those in parish and school, particularly parish priests and principals, who are mandated to lead their respective parishes and schools in drawing young people and their families into the knowledge and understanding of Christ. Knowledge of Christ grows and becomes fruitful when centred upon the word of God, which should find a welcome home in the hearts and classrooms of our Catholic schools.

The company I have established, MACS, governs and operates the schools belonging to the Archdiocese, and it has been tasked with taking up the legacy I describe above. Changes in governance of Catholic schools requires renewed commitment to collegiality and goodwill for it to be a success.

Above all, we trust in the power and the inspiration of the Holy Spirit at work among us.

I am confident in the leaders of our mission who carry this renewed faithfulness forward.

I draw your attention to the Statement of Mission that prefaces this charter and is central to the MACS constitution. The essential message of the statement is a call and a challenge for us to provide the best possible Catholic education for our young people as they embark on their life journey as a fruit of the gospel.

Now as ever, parents are the 'first and most important educators' of their children (John Paul II 1994, n. 16). Parish priests and principals are entrusted with a leadership founded on Christ's model of servanthood to others, and in a Catholic school this means a fundamental care and concern with the families of students and a partnership with parents. I encourage the formation of school advisory councils at primary and secondary levels that fit the pastoral model of each particular parish or association of parishes. These school advisory councils are avenues for parents to contribute to their children's school and build up one another.

For priests who have not been as involved in the work and mission of the school/s in their parish, this new way of operating Catholic schools is an invitation for you to work more closely with your school principals in the common mission we share. For priests who have had a close involvement in their parish school, my expectation is that the new arrangement takes nothing away from your authentic pastoral

leadership in the life of your school/s, but fosters new possibilities and a new vitality. The articulation of roles and responsibilities for priests, principals and school advisory councils charts out a path ahead, and I hope we will feel inspired in this moment to take on the work of Catholic education with a new sense of calling, responsibility and inspiration.

I commend this *Working Together in Mission* charter to you, as you lead your parishes and schools which strive to join the work of education with the explicit proclamation of the gospel.

All of us are called to be witnesses in the world to the goodness and mercy of God, and to share with others what we have been blessed to receive.

In a particular way, we draw inspiration from our Mother Mary, blessed and full of grace, who prays for every student and every participant in our school communities. Mary walks with us and encourages us in our common call to holiness, and invites a sharing of our lives with the saints who pray for us in all our needs.

With trust in Mary and in faithfulness to her Son, I offer every blessing in your ministry of witness and leadership.

Most Rev Peter A Comensoli
Archbishop of Melbourne

1 January 2021
Solemnity Mary, Mother of God



The essential message of the statement is a call and a challenge for us to provide the best possible Catholic education for our young people as they embark on their life journey as a fruit of the gospel.

Statement of Mission

Catholic schooling seeks to provide the young with the best kind of education possible, one that fosters a formation of the whole person that is deeply and enduringly humanising (Francis 2019, n. 223).

Education is integral to the mission of the Church to proclaim the Good News. First and foremost every Catholic educational institution is a place to encounter the living God who in Jesus Christ reveals his transforming love and truth. This relationship elicits a desire to grow in the knowledge and understanding of Christ and his teaching. In this way those who meet him are drawn by the very power of the Gospel to lead a new life characterized by all that is beautiful, good, and true; a life of Christian witness nurtured and strengthened within the community of our Lord's disciples, the Church (Benedict XVI 2008).

With parents and parishes, Catholic schooling seeks to fulfil this mission by providing an environment in which students are enabled to:

- encounter God in Christ and deepen their relationship with him
- pursue wisdom and truth encouraged by a supportive academic culture
- grow in the practice of virtue, responsible freedom and serving the common good.

A Catholic school:

- is actively embedded in the life of the faith communities of the local Church, which in turn is tangibly manifest in the life of each school
- is an essential place for the evangelising of children and young people
- prioritises the forming of missionary disciples of Jesus
- exists to assist students and their families to integrate faith, reason, life and culture (Francis 2019, n. 222)
- is conspicuously Christian in outlook, explicitly Catholic in faith and practice, and intentionally missionary in orientation
- cultivates spiritual, social and emotional growth in a safe and protective environment

- provides a learning environment in which the whole educational community is formed to embrace life in all its fullness (John 10: 10)
- offers a human formation that has the intellectual, practical and moral excellence of learners at its heart
- forms consciences, fosters peace and develops respectful dialogue at the service of intellectual charity
- encourages the discovery of Catholic cultural heritage, especially in art, music, literature and architecture.

Catholic schools, which always strive to join their work of education with the explicit proclamation of the Gospel, are a most valuable resource for the evangelization of culture (Francis 2013, n. 134).

The good work of educating the young, undertaken in the light of the Gospel, is a co-responsible task led by every member of the Catholic school community. Modelled by parents, principals and teachers, in prayer and with wisdom, through witness and by example, Catholic schooling is at the service of the integral human formation of children and young people in Christ.

A Catholic school is eucharistic in character.

The sacramental and prayer life of the local Church, especially in the gathering of God's People in Sunday Mass, is integral to the mission of a Catholic school and indispensable to its richness. A fruitful sign of the living witness of faith with parents and parishes is the participation of students and families in the life, mission and work of the local faith community, especially in the call to worship God and to serve the poor and marginalised (Acts 2: 42–47).

By cultivating a maturing of faith and the intellectual life through the modelling of good relationships, Catholic school students are prepared for living fruitfully in the world.

The good work of educating the young, undertaken in the light of the Gospel, is a co-responsible task led by every member of the Catholic school community.

A message from the Executive Director and Episcopal Vicar for Catholic Schools

Catholic schooling in the Archdiocese of Melbourne has a long and proud history dating back to the early years of the colony that became the State of Victoria. Across the nearly 200 years that have elapsed since then, countless committed Catholic families have supported the extraordinary educational work and commitment of thousands of clergy, religious and lay educators to further the nurturance of the faith and the life development of young people in light of the mercy of God revealed in Jesus Christ.

In countless ways, the Catholic classroom in our Archdiocese has been a place of witness to that same spirit that animated the life of St Mary of the Cross MacKillop, of heartfelt witness to Jesus in the lives of students from a diverse range of backgrounds.

We are inheritors of a great gift in Catholic education, and any changes to governance must continue in the trajectory of the best of what has been achieved in the past, even as our schools respond to the new challenges and opportunities that arise at the interface between our teachers and the social contexts of the students and their families.

The context of the *Working Together in Mission* charter is that governance arrangements for schools in the Archdiocese of Melbourne owned by the Archdiocese, its parishes or associations of parishes were changed from 1 January 2021. Under the new arrangements, schools owned by the Archdiocese, parishes or associations of parishes were transferred

to Melbourne Archdiocese Catholic Schools Ltd (MACS). Governance arrangements for schools owned by religious institutes and ministerial public juridic persons have not been impacted by the governance change, and will continue to be supported as they have always been.

The purpose of this charter is to articulate how the mission is realised by those in key roles such as priests and principals as they work in collaboration with school staff, students, parents and the wider parish community. Authorised by the Archbishop, who as the leader of the local Church lays the foundation of the mission of Catholic education, the guidelines determined by this charter have been developed in consultation with and endorsed by the Council of Priests, and associations of principals and parents.

Dr Edward Simons
Executive Director

Very Rev Mark Reynolds EV PP
Episcopal Vicar for Catholic Schools

The purpose of this charter is to articulate how the mission is realised by those in key roles such as priests and principals as they work in collaboration with school staff, students, parents and the wider parish community.

Contents

Foreword	1
A message from the Archbishop	1
Statement of Mission	3
A message from the Executive Director and Episcopal Vicar for Catholic Schools	4
Introduction	6
The purpose of the charter	6
Summary of roles	7
Priest and principal	7
Catholic life	8
Fidelity to mission	8
Catholic identity	10
Liturgical and sacramental life of parish and school	11
Roles and responsibilities	12
Role of the parish priest and canonical administrators	12
Role of the principal	15
Relationship between parish, association of parishes, priest and principal	17
Role of the school advisory council	18
Role of parents in the Catholic school	19
Enrolments and staffing	20
Enrolments	21
Staffing	21
Property and common spaces	22
References	24

A young boy and girl in school uniforms are lighting candles in a white bowl. The boy is on the left, and the girl is on the right. They are both smiling and looking at the candles. The background is a blurred indoor setting with a large circular object on the wall.

Introduction

The purpose of the charter

This charter, *Working Together in Mission*, outlines the roles and responsibilities of those who lead the shared work and mission of Catholic parishes and schools in the Archdiocese of Melbourne. It is agreed to and endorsed by the Archbishop of Melbourne and the board of Melbourne Archdiocese Catholic Schools Ltd (MACS).

As of 1 January 2021, the charter speaks with the authority of the Archdiocese and MACS. Changes to the charter can be authorised by the MACS board, in agreement with the member of the company and in consultation with those who have an interest and involvement in the parish-school relationship.

This new model of governance brings opportunities for a shared and aspiring quality in how we serve students and their families. This change does not lessen the spiritual leadership of parish priests, nor reduce the significance of the local parish community. Both are crucial to the mission of Catholic education and this charter gives clear definition to their place under these new arrangements, and honours the long and rich legacy of Catholic schools in Melbourne.

Parish priests and principals hold distinctive roles of leadership in their parish and school communities, and therefore it is essential that they work collaboratively to ensure that the relationship between parish and school is central to providing the religious leadership necessary for the success of the mission.

The charter operates in conjunction with the MACS constitution and serves as a clear guide to the building-up of leaders and their collaboration into the future, for the sake of a fruitful and responsible shared witness to the gospel in Catholic schooling.

Summary of roles

Priest and principal

The priest:*

- is the custodian of mission
- leads and is co-responsible with the principal for the religious life of the school
- celebrates liturgy and sacraments
- is spiritual guide and mentor to the principal, staff and community
- participates in primary school senior appointments by being a member of the appointment panel (principal, deputy principal and Religious Education leader)
- participates in the appointment panel for regional college principals and may participate in the panels for other senior appointments
- represents the parish as the beneficial owner of land and buildings
- is responsible for the patrimony and good name of the parish and school
- is an ex officio member of the school advisory council
- forms a collaborative relationship and works closely with the principal in promoting unity, common vision and mission, and purpose
- works together with the principal in promoting mutual support and respect
- meets frequently with the principal
- supports, encourages and guides the school's Religious Education program
- supports the school staff with religious retreats, and spiritual and theological formation.

The principal:

- works together with the priest in nurturing the Catholic identity, religious dimension and faith formation of the school
- is responsible for the safety and wellbeing of all students in the school
- works with others to develop a vision for the school
- connects the school to the school's parish or association of parishes
- works collaboratively and closely with the priest, meeting regularly to promote unity, common vision and mission, and purpose
- collaborates with the priest in supporting the liturgical and sacramental life of the school
- is responsible for the Religious Education program in the school according to diocesan directives
- is the educational leader of the school
- is responsible for promoting a contemporary approach to teaching and learning, and overall educational outcomes of the students
- is responsible for the day-to-day managerial, administrative, compliance and statutory tasks of the school
- has overall stewardship for the people and resources of the school
- encourages outreach to the community, particularly in supporting parent engagement in the school and involvement in their child's education
- is an ex officio member of the school advisory council
- works together with the priest in promoting mutual support and respect.

*For parish primary schools, the 'priest' is the parish priest of the school's parish and for regional colleges, the 'priest' is a parish priest who is a member of the college's association of canonical administrators.

A young girl with light brown hair tied back, wearing a dark blue school uniform with a white collar, is speaking at a wooden podium. The background is a church interior with a large wooden crucifix on the left, a white altar cloth, and a window with light coming through. The overall lighting is soft and slightly dim, creating a solemn atmosphere.

Catholic life

Fidelity to mission

Leaders in Catholic schooling faithfully carry forward the mission of sharing the gospel in the particular contexts of Catholic primary and secondary schools. At the heart of their mission is a living witness to Jesus Christ, whose new life of communion with God is to be shared mercifully and courageously. The Catholic school is a place of encounter with that divine love, worked out in the education of each student so that they can grow in wisdom.

Authentic relationships between the three dimensions of lifelong Christian education – family, parish and school – are central to who we are as messengers of the gospel. This is highlighted in the Statement of Mission: 'A Catholic school is actively embedded in the life of the faith communities of the local Church, which in turn is tangibly manifest in the life of each school.'

The roles of parish priest, principal, teachers and school advisory council are articulated here to strengthen the mission and lived experience of Catholic schools in serving students and their families. The Statement of Mission orients priests and principals in their collaboration through distinct but complementary responsibilities in the leadership roles they exercise in the school and the parish. The parish priest and the parish continue to play their vital roles in providing the environment and faith community in which the school's Catholic mission and identity can be expressed as a 'summons to revive our hope' (Francis 2016, n. 57). The Catholic school does not sit isolated from the parish, even if its management and governance is operated through a separate but closely related company.

In selecting a Catholic school, parents specifically choose a school community where learning is steeped in the teachings of Jesus Christ and his Church, where the quality of the education matches their aspirations for their child, and where their child is enabled to be a 'beacon of goodness, integrity and justice' in the world (Francis 2014).

The Statement of Mission, endorsed by the Archbishop and pivotal to the MACS constitution, reinforces this when it states: 'The good work of educating the young, undertaken in the light of the Gospel, is a co-responsible task led by every member of the Catholic school community.'

This same theme is developed in *Horizons of Hope*: 'The Catholic school is commissioned by the Church to attend to the full flourishing of the person as created in the image and likeness of God. By its work of educating in openness to the mystery of God and in response to Jesus' commandment of love, the school becomes a presence of the Church in the local and wider society. The Catholic school therefore has a clear religious identity, operating in a context of Catholic faith and promoting the formation of students' identity in dialogue with that faith' (CEM 2017, p. 4).

The modelling of positive and collaborative relationships among key personnel, particularly parish priest, canonical administrator and principal, is fundamental to the success of a school's fidelity to mission, as their leadership roles are critical in forming a school community which responds to the challenge of living the gospel in their daily lives. Collaborating with these key roles are the other vocational expressions of Christian calling, including the bishops, priests and deacons of the Archdiocese, religious sisters and brothers, lay women and men, baptised singles, married spouses and all who will, from time to time, work to support Catholic schools.

Parish priests cannot be expected to carry the work of leading the faith community on complex issues by themselves. Since the Second Vatican Council, lay leaders have been encouraged to take a special responsibility for their particular spheres of influence, no less in education than any other field (see especially Paul VI 1965, n. 20). In the challenging areas of beginning and end of life matters, questions of human dignity and diversity, lifestyles and relationships, marriage and family, lay leaders have a special role of wisdom and integrity to offer. When giving Christian witness in the life of the Catholic school, key leaders such as principals, deputy principals and Religious Education leaders are models

'A Catholic school is actively embedded in the life of the faith communities of the local Church, which in turn is tangibly manifest in the life of each school.'

of good behaviour, and do so under public scrutiny in their communities with a responsibility on behalf of, and to, the Catholic community.

The religious identity of the school, and the wellbeing of students and families are not and cannot be solely the responsibility of the principal alone. Teachers in our Catholic schools are to see themselves as being privileged to have a particularly important responsibility today in developing quality relationships with their students by modelling good behaviour and in the manner in which they imbue their teaching with a religious perspective. All staff in a Catholic school have both the privilege and the responsibility of contributing to the school's ethos and the pastoral care of the students.

While not invading their privacy, teachers need to know their students and their families to the extent that they are aware of individual needs, and how they may support and enhance the wellbeing of each individual person.

All members of a school community have a role to play in strengthening the many ways the whole of school life is enlivened by Catholic faith that all may come to the fullness of life in accord with the will of Jesus Christ who said, 'I have come that they may have life, and have it abundantly' (John 10: 10).

Key responsibilities:

- Priests are the primary faith leaders in the parish and work collaboratively with principals in faith leadership of both primary and secondary schools.
- The beating heart of Catholic education is a shared fidelity to mission, and both priest and principal are responsible for sharing trust and goodwill.
- Key leaders such as principals, deputy principals and Religious Education leaders are public witnesses to Catholic faith and freely take up the work of modelling the mission in their leadership roles.
- Teachers as well as all members of the school community play a part in enlivening the school by the way in which they contribute to the school's Catholic ethos and to the pastoral care of the students.

Catholic identity

Catholic schools are different to other educational settings because:

From the first moment that a student sets foot in a Catholic school, he or she ought to have the impression of entering a new environment, one illumined by the light of faith, and having its own unique characteristics. The [Second Vatican] Council summed this up by speaking of an environment permeated with the Gospel spirit of love and freedom (Congregation for Catholic Education 1988, n. 25).

'Catholic schools are deeply connected to and empowered by the Catholic Church to illuminate education through the light of Christ. It is through the ecclesial nature of the school that the religious dimension has its life' (CEM 2017, p. 12). How the members of the Catholic school pray, learn, celebrate, belong in community and actively reach out beyond that community are all expressions of its religious dimension. The religious dimension is intentionally developed and sustained by the religious leadership of the parish priest or canonical administrator together with the principal and leadership team, with specific attention to ongoing spiritual and faith formation of staff, parents and students.

When Catholic parents or parents from a different faith tradition choose to send their child to a Catholic school, there is an expectation that the religious dimension of the school will be pre-eminent in the educational journey of the child and that the family will be welcomed and included on that journey.

These circumstances present a challenge to those in parishes and schools to continue to find ways to evangelise the students in their care. According to the General Directory for Catechesis, this is achieved primarily through the proclamation and continual reiteration of the kerygma, which simply means the sharing of the gospel (Congregation for the Clergy 1997). Every pope and major teaching document of the Church since the Second Vatican Council has repeatedly insisted that the gospel is to be shared, and the Good News of Christ belongs to the work of all Catholic leaders and their communities. In other words, any major project or work of the Church, including education, is fundamentally shaped by the gospel and has the sharing of the gospel as its mission. This call to action incorporates witness to Christian faith by building authentic relationships and collaboration between parish, family and school.





Liturgical and sacramental life of parish and school

It is especially when gathered at the altar of the Eucharist that Christ's Church is made visible and unity is expressed. School and parish therefore jointly strive for an animated sense of community, above all in the shared celebration of the Sunday Mass. The various forms of prayer and ritual celebrated in the school serve to familiarise students and their families with communal parish worship, with the parish priest leading the school community in liturgy, especially in the celebration of the Eucharist along with Reconciliation.

Responding to Canon 843 §2, which exhorts priests and other members of the Christian faithful to work collaboratively according to their respective functions in preparing students for the sacraments, the school supports the parish in sacramental programs by assisting with communication and engagement with parents through the formal Religious Education program.

Because this is a work of collaboration, the parish priest has a continual role as the leader with regard to sacramental programs assisted by Catholic lay leaders and educators.

The faith development of the staff and the students, including their preparation for and participation in the sacramental life of the Church, is among the highest concerns of the principal. The principal works with the parish priest in this endeavour as parishes and

schools work together to assist parents in the spiritual formation of the students in their care.

In a secondary school, the principal continues the collaboration between the school and the association that established it to support the provision of sacramental programs for eligible students.

Key responsibilities:

- The sacramental and liturgical life of the Church is a distinctive and central aspect of Catholic life and practice, shared by everyone, and in which all leaders have a responsibility to uphold and invest their time and energy.
- Priest and principal work together to ensure that sacramental and liturgical opportunities are provided for the students of that school and their families.
- Parish priests, canonical administrators and principals will encourage students and their families to attend Sunday Mass by invitation and be involved in the wider life of the parish or association of parishes.

The various forms of prayer and ritual celebrated in the school serve to familiarise students and their families with communal parish worship, with the parish priest leading the school community in liturgy, especially in the celebration of the Eucharist along with Reconciliation.



Roles and responsibilities

Role of the parish priest and canonical administrators

The parish priest¹ is entrusted by the Archbishop with the canonical responsibility of the parish to which he has been appointed (Can. 515 §1 as cited in Coriden, Green & Heintschel 1985). He exercises pastoral care of the community by gathering the faithful together in the person of Jesus Christ through proclamation of the Word and celebration of the Eucharist and sacraments, and through the life of the local Church in its pastoral care and outreach to those most in need or on the margins. Through his mentoring and formative roles, the parish priest has a central role in the life of the school.

With respect to canon law and the principles of subsidiarity and solidarity, the parish priest has defined rights and responsibilities in the life of the parish and the diocese, and is appointed as the pastor of the People of God in a defined location. This is the pastoral context in which Catholic primary schools operate and by virtue of which the parish priest has a duty to serve school communities within that parish or association of parishes.

The canonical responsibilities and authority of the priest for the religious life of the school remain unchanged in the new governance arrangements, even as his duties in areas such as governance, administration and employment are transferred to MACS. In fact, one of the goals of the governance transfer is that the priest is freed from administrative responsibility to be more available to the school for the formation of staff and other forms of pastoral ministry critical to the school's capacity to realise its mission.

1. References to parish priest also include any priest assigned responsibilities such as an administrator.

An essential role of the priest is his sacramental ministry, which is largely demonstrated by bringing together and growing the parish community, inclusive of the school community. Therefore, he must have a central role in the life of the school, be it a primary school located in his parish or a regional secondary college under the care of an association of surrounding parishes. The presence of the priest in the life of a school is welcome, normative and essential.

The leadership and support of the parish priest is necessary to ensure the school is faithful to its distinctive Catholic mission and identity. As the Eucharist is the source and summit of Catholic faith, the priest plays a critical role in fostering the school's religious identity through his leadership of the liturgical and sacramental life of the school. In a parish primary school, the celebration of the sacraments of initiation and reconciliation provides a particular point of focus for the parish priest along with class Masses, visits to Religious Education classes, the formation of staff and other forms of pastoral outreach.

Each school community presents a unique context for ministry, and the relationship between the priest and the principal and key leaders in the school provides a foundation for discerning how best to respond to the pastoral needs of the students, their families and the staff in the school. The parish priest is easily accessible to the school community to have regular contact with the principal, leadership team, staff and students. The parish school only realises its Catholic mission when it is connected organically and vitally with the parish of which it is a part. The parish priest therefore has a critical role to play in the life of the school, representing the parish community as the custodian of mission. It is crucial that each parish priest and principal work closely together to ensure that the school remains connected to its parish and is an authentic expression of the mission of the local Church.

The principal will always keep the parish priest appropriately informed of key elements of the life of the school community. Regular meetings between the parish priest, the principal and the school's leadership team will build relationships that enable all leaders to enrich the life and mission of their school.

The parish priest participates in the principal selection process through membership of the selection panel,

Each school community presents a unique context for ministry, and the relationship between the priest and the principal and key leaders in the school provides a foundation for discerning how best to respond to the pastoral needs of the students, their families and the staff in the school.



and should be part of the selection panel for the deputy principal and the Religious Education leader. The parish priest is an ex officio member of the school advisory council for parish primary schools in his parish, and ensures that the school advisory council supports the principal and the mission of the parish. Parish priests also play a critical role on school advisory councils as they continue to represent their parish as the beneficial owner of the school's land and buildings. Parish priests must therefore approve any initiative that materially affects the school's land and buildings or other areas of parish property.

It is critical that the parish priest and principal work closely together and that regular, calendared opportunities are scheduled for both to meet and attend to the school's mission and religious identity. The parish priest has a critical role to play in the formation of staff in the school and this formative role can be supported by programs and services offered by MACS and other Catholic agencies.

Association of canonical administrators

The size and complexity of secondary schools generally mean that it is not possible for any parish working alone to establish a secondary college or provide the number of students necessary for it to function effectively. Over time, and as the need arose in growth areas of the Archdiocese, parishes in particular regions joined together to form associations to establish secondary colleges. Each regional college is owned by a canonical association comprising

the parish priests of the member parishes of the association. These parish priests collectively are the canonical administrators who own the regional colleges and, as is the case with the parish primary school, the canonical administrators in each association have a duty to serve their college community by providing pastoral outreach to its families and students. The pastoral outreach exercised by canonical administrators has a different focus and shape given the age of the students and the nature of secondary education. The canonical administrators work together collaboratively with the principal as custodians of the college's mission and Catholic identity. Canonical administrators play a key role in the school's liturgies and year-level retreats, staff faith formation programs, family outreach and other forms of pastoral ministry.

As is the case in parish primary schools, canonical administrators of a secondary school are welcomed into the life of the school by the principal and kept appropriately informed of matters in the life of the school. Regular meetings of the association of canonical administrators with the principal and the college leadership team enable relationships to be built that provide a foundation for the college's Catholic life and mission.

The president of the association of canonical administrators has a coordinating role and provides a primary point of contact and support for the principal. The president ensures that meetings occur with and among the association's members, thus enabling them to contribute effectively to the advancement of the school's Catholic mission and life. The president works with the principal to identify opportunities for the involvement of association members in the life of the college, including membership of the senior leadership selection panels, inclusion in school reviews, membership of the school advisory council and participation in the principal's professional review.

As is the case with the parish primary school, ownership of the regional college's land and buildings does not transfer to MACS when the governance transition takes place. Beneficial ownership of the college's land and buildings remains with the association of canonical administrators as the representatives of the parishes that are associated with each regional college. While the president represents his fellow priests in signing off on capital works, he needs to ensure that all members of the association support any initiative that materially affects the college's land and buildings or its Catholic mission.

Key responsibilities:

- Priest and principal work together to ensure that the means by which we enter into the mystery of Christ (the Sacred Scriptures, the sacraments, liturgy and prayer, doctrinal teaching, and the witness of the saints and the Christian community) are given a significant profile for students and parents enrolled in the Catholic school.
- As spiritual guide and mentor in the parish, which includes the school community, the priest is responsible for cultivating a supportive and pastoral relationship with the principal and leadership team of the school.
- The priest is the beneficial owner of the parish and school land and buildings, and the patrimony and good name of the parish ultimately sit within his responsibility. Consideration of use of school space outside normal Catholic education purposes requires agreement between principal and priest. Agreement will need to be reached with the parish for any proposals for a school to make use of parish space. The same is true for the association of canonical administrators.
- The priest participates in the selection panel for appointment of principal in both primary and secondary schools. In primary schools, the priest is also part of the deputy principal and Religious Education leader panels, and may be for secondary schools. He can participate in other selection processes for leaders of a school by common agreement with a principal and, in all cases, consensus for appointments is the objective.
- In both primary and secondary schools, the principal is responsible for the thoughtful nurturing of faith among teachers and students, and brings to the parish priest/canonical administrator decisions of significance to the life of faith in that community, including questions concerning reputation and the general good of the broader parish family.

Role of the principal

The principal is a leader mandated by MACS to model a form of Christian servanthood that maintain the bonds of communion between the school and the wider parish, diocese and the universal Catholic Church. This is a great task for which ongoing formation, support and encouragement are required. Catholic doctrine informs and animates these expressions of unity and pastoral care, and provides the means of giving shape to authentic witness to the whole school community. These are organic relationships built up and made stronger by a responsible attentiveness to the life of faith, hope and charity.

As leader of the school, the principal works most closely with the parish priest to lead the religious mission in the school community. The principal exercises this leadership under the authority of the bishop of the diocese in taking responsibility for the provision of religious instruction by means of a Religious Education program, and for the maintenance of acceptable standards of Religious Education in accordance with the policies and guidelines of diocesan authorities. Ongoing formation of principals is critical for their leadership to be effective, particularly as the cultural context becomes more secularised and pluralised.

Ongoing formation of staff is also the responsibility of the principal who works collaboratively with the priest in providing opportunities for personal, professional and faith formation. In the provision of formative opportunities, particularly in faith formation, MACS will offer support to school leadership as the board

is committed to enhancing the mission and religious identity of the schools under its care. Of particular interest to principals, Religious Education leaders and other senior members of staff is the opportunity to undertake spiritual direction as a means of deepening one's individual spiritual life.

Key responsibilities of the principal's role include development of the faith community, particular focus on the safety and wellbeing of students, formulation of a vision for the whole school, attention to contemporary teaching and learning in order to engage all students, and stewardship of the people and resources with particular outreach to the parent community.

In particular, the principal is committed to shaping a school community in which teachers are valued as the immediate witnesses in the learning environment. Principals are cognisant of the cultural environment in which a Catholic school works and the irreplaceable role of the teachers with whom they collaborate.

As Pope Paul VI observed:

Modern man listens more willingly to witnesses than to teachers, and if he does listen to teachers, it is because they are witnesses (1975, n. 41).

The principal works with the leaders and representatives of the local Church, collaborating with staff and members of the school community to achieve the mission of the school. All responsibilities of the principal are executed within a framework of ministry that is inspired by the values and vision of the gospel which seeks to enhance the Catholic identity of the school at all times.

As a person with a strong sense of the educational mission of the Church, the principal demonstrates strong religious leadership and the animation of the school community's faith journey.



As a person with a strong sense of the educational mission of the Church, the principal demonstrates strong religious leadership and the animation of the school community's faith journey.

The principal has a special responsibility to strike a balance between the commitments of solidarity and subsidiarity, which are linked together in every local community (Benedict XVI 2009, n. 58). Because the principal leads a school that sits within a broader parish context, goodwill and charity will be disposed to the parish priest and parish community. In a governance model that respects canon law and the principle of subsidiarity, the authority, rights and responsibilities of parish priests are recognised, as are the leadership and management that must be exercised at the local level by principals and staff in schools.

This principal recognises that the tensions arising in every school between solidarity and subsidiarity are resolved through quality relationships and communications.

The principal is responsible for creating opportunities for canonical administrators from the association of parishes to be involved in the faith life of the secondary school, and encourages the priests from the respective parishes to make ongoing contact with the students represented in the school from their particular parish.

Key responsibilities:

- By the appointment as principal in a Catholic school, the principal is charged with the duty to build up the school according to the Statement of Mission and the MACS constitution.
- A principal is entrusted by the local Church (the diocese) with a leadership role in modelling and teaching the Catholic faith, encouraging the living out of that faith in the school community, as well as exercising special responsibility under the authority of the bishop for the religious instruction in the school.
- While entrusted with distinct roles of administrative, managerial, educational, compliance and statutory leadership, the principal collaborates closely with the parish priest in the enhancement of the Catholic identity and mission of the school.
- The principal has responsibility for the school's faith community and vision, safety and wellbeing of the students, teaching and learning, people and resources, and community outreach.



Relationship between parish, association of parishes, priest and principal

The Catholic school is an expression of the essential evangelising mission of the parish and it is vital that schools develop and maintain fruitful relationships within the local parish/es. Here it is important to note that Catholic schools cannot be Catholic on their own and, in fact, can only be Catholic when they are in communion with the wider Church and its mission.

To be in communion is to be in a deep relationship and the relationships take many forms. For the parish primary school, the relationship with the wider parish plays a central and crucial role in its Catholic mission and identity. Similarly for the Catholic regional college, the relationship with the parishes in the association that founded the college is critical for its mission and identity. Finally, a diocesan college is founded by the Archdiocese (rather than an association of parishes), but the relationships with the wider Church and the parishes of their students are just as critical when it comes to the college's Catholic mission and identity.

The relationship between mission and identity is expressed very well by Pope John Paul II in *Christifideles Laici*: 'Communion and mission are profoundly connected with each other, they interpenetrate and mutually imply each other to the point that communion represents both the source and the fruit of mission: communion gives rise to mission and mission is accomplished in communion' (1988, n. 32).

The school recognises the considerable contribution the parish, and parish families, makes to the school and for the Catholic education of its students. The school therefore plays a key role in parish community life and cannot be thought of in isolation from parish (or parishes in the situation where a school, whether primary or secondary, services more than one parish).

Catholic schools exist because they are Catholic in their mission and identity. The vitality of the mission of the Catholic school is enlivened when the school is embedded in the life of the local parish through the fostering of close and life-giving relationships with families and parishes.

Catholic education is a key ministry of the parish, and the parish priest is the key messenger in the evangelisation and education in faith within the parish. Therefore his leadership and support are necessary to ensure the school is faithful to its distinctive Catholic identity and spirituality.

Likewise the priests recognise the important ministry they have as key educators in faith in Catholic secondary schools as they represent the association of parishes to which the school belongs.

It is therefore critical that the priest and principal foster a strong collaborative relationship and that

regular, calendared opportunities are scheduled for both to meet and an agreed record of the discussions maintained. Formal and informal meetings are necessary as a means for planning and review. Opportunities for priest and principal to engage together with other members of the parishes and school also assist in developing good relationships between them.

In any situations of dispute or a divergence of directions between parish and school, which cannot be handled satisfactorily locally, resolution will be managed by collaboration between MACS and the Archdiocese.

Key responsibilities:

- Priest and principal are the key leaders for the vitality of the mission of a Catholic school and together share in responsibility for that school community; significant questions of faith, formation and strategic direction must be handled in partnership.
- Investment of time and resources in life-giving relationships between priest, principal and families breathes life into the Catholic school community, requiring of priests and principals that common risks and challenges are brought to one another's attention and resolved collaboratively.
- The priest is a leader and a participant in the school community, and the principal has a responsibility to facilitate a priest's presence and evangelising role within the life of the school.
- A priest and principal must meet frequently to discuss significant matters within parish and school. How this partnership is conducted can be worked out locally, but MACS and the Archdiocese share in a responsibility to cultivate an environment of support and encouragement.
- Dispute resolutions will be managed by collaboration between MACS and the Archdiocese.

Role of the school advisory council

School advisory councils do not share in the governance of Catholic schools, but provide a crucial point of connection between the wider school community and school leaders. While they do not have a decision-making authority, they inform and advise the principal and school leadership.

While the MACS board has fiduciary responsibility for strategic direction and oversight of the management of MACS' operations, a range of powers and functions are delegated to the executive director who in turn determines the appropriate operating model within the company for the delegation to be exercised. Clear lines of authority, reporting and delegation have been established which assign the operational management of the school to the principal and particular advisory responsibilities to the school advisory council. While these responsibilities are outlined in the school advisory council terms of reference, it is important council members understand their role is to give consideration to, and advice on, important school matters in order to support the principal and the strategic interest of the school. The following are some examples of ways the School Advisory Council may support the school and the principal:

- articulating and enacting the school's vision and mission
- promoting the school's Catholic ethos and culture
- promoting faith formation and development
- supporting school policies as required
- giving advice to the principal on issues such as school improvement plans and enrolment trends
- engaging in discussion with the principal about the annual school budget and other financial matters
- giving advice to the principal about the school master plan
- providing capital resource planning and maintenance support to the principal.

As an advisory body, the school advisory council develops processes of consultation that are an important expression of the educational relationship that exists between parents, schools, parishes and the wider parish community to support all students in the enhancement of their outcomes.

In a one-school one-parish situation, there may be a single school advisory council but, in a situation where one parish has multiple schools, then one school advisory council covering all schools may be advisable. Principals and priests have the flexibility to adapt the school advisory council terms of reference to their school's own particular needs.

MACS provides ongoing support to school advisory councils such as policy guidance and templates for their work, but is not responsible for their activities, utilising principles of subsidiarity and solidarity.

Key responsibilities:

- School advisory councils are an important vehicle for consultation between parish, school and parents.
- They do not share in governance responsibilities, but act as a connection point between the wider school community and school leaders.
- They are an important point of liaison with parish pastoral councils.
- Through this forum, parent representatives share their wisdom with, and offer support to, principals and the strategic interests of the school according to their terms of reference.
- Priests have an important ex officio role to play on these advisory councils, but can adjust their participation according to local need and circumstance, such as the number of schools in the parish, and would normally attend meetings.
- Priests and principals are ex officio members.
- Terms of office on the school advisory council are determined by the council's terms of reference.

Role of parents in the Catholic school

Catholic schools view parents as having a valued role in the education of the students in partnership with educators. It is the privilege of a school to educate the students of families who choose a Catholic school. The Catholic Church defines parents as the first and most important educators of their children. Since the Second Vatican Council, this has been a constant focus of Catholic educators in the life of the Church:

The role of parents in education is of such importance that it is almost impossible to provide an adequate substitute (Catechism of the Catholic Church 1999, n. 2221).

In a Catholic school, parents are invited to engage in their children's learning and in their school community. Parents can be engaged in schools in a variety of ways, but of utmost importance is that parents know they are supported in the academic, spiritual, moral and emotional guidance they give to their children. Therefore it is vital that priests and principals encourage parents to have a sense of community and belonging with parish and school, and to become engaged in whatever ways possible.

The school advisory council is one means of engagement with parents that enables a fruitful participation in consultation on matters affecting the education of students.

Parents have a particularly important part to play in the educating community, since it is to them that primary and natural responsibility for their children's education belongs (Congregation for Catholic Education 1997, n. 20).

Catholic school communities build relationships between parish and school, between school and home, between parent, teacher and student, between learning and living, focused on formation, learning and wellbeing outcomes for all children (CEM 2020, p. 10).



There must be the closest cooperation between parents and the teachers to whom they entrust their children to be educated. In fulfilling this task, teachers are to collaborate closely with the parents and willingly listen to them; associations and meetings with parents are to be set up and held in high esteem (Can. 796 §2 as cited in Coriden, Green & Heintschel 1985).

Key responsibilities:

- Parents are the first and most important educators of their children, and all leaders in a Catholic school play a crucial role in supporting that vocation by engaging parents in their children's learning.
- Priests and principals work together to evangelise the students in their care, encouraging parent engagement in the parish and school community.
- School advisory councils have their own local history and identity, and are an important way in which a healthy and mutually informed participation is cultivated between parish, school and parents.

A man in a white shirt and tie is pointing at a whiteboard in a classroom. He is looking towards the right side of the frame. The whiteboard has some faint writing on it. The background is a blue wall.

Enrolments and staffing

At the heart of a Catholic school enrolment policy is the humble task of evangelisation. If Catholic schools are to fulfill their mission, then it is important to ensure those who populate the school community, staff, parents and students, have as their central focus that Catholic schools exist to educate the whole person in the light of the gospel.

If Catholic schools are to be more than simply a place where students are given an academic education, it is imperative that parents and staff see their role is to challenge students to understand that their education is about a synthesis of faith and wellbeing, as well as academic learning that gives students hope, purpose and optimism for their life journey.

Enrolments

The words of Canon 781 suggest that the Catholic school participates in the evangelising mission of the Church and this needs to be at the forefront of thinking when enrolling students. While the priority is for Catholic families to be enrolled at both primary and secondary levels in our schools, when students of diverse religious and other backgrounds have been enrolled, the schools will be respectful of this diversity of students and their families and take every opportunity to promote mutual understanding and inclusiveness.

Every effort will be made by the Archdiocese to provide a Catholic education for Catholic families (and others) who have a desire and commitment to have their students educated within a Catholic ethos.

MACS enrolment policies set expectations that parents of students who are not Catholic accept and support the Catholic identity of the school as a condition of enrolment.

Given the joint responsibility owned by the parish priest and principal in ensuring the Catholic identity of the school is paramount, they collaborate in the development and implementation of enrolment processes according to local need; however, it needs to be kept in mind that the archdiocesan enrolment policy acts as a guideline.

Key responsibilities:

- The Enrolment Policy for MACS schools (2023) establishes the primary regard for the evangelising mission of the Church and the local needs of the parish.
- The Archdiocese will make every effort to provide a Catholic education for those who wish.



Staffing

In parish primary schools and in secondary schools, the parish priest or canonical administrator will be a member of the appointment panel for principals. The priest will be a member of the appointment panel for deputy principals and Religious Education leaders in primary schools, and may be in secondary schools.

Selection panels will be tasked with reaching consensus to find the best possible candidate. Appointment of principals will be ratified by the Archbishop and carried out by MACS on the advice of the executive director.

Key responsibilities:

- At both primary and secondary levels, the principal makes all other staff appointments.

Property and common spaces

The parish priest has oversight of the temporal assets of all parish-related entities including the school, and is responsible for the patrimony of the land and buildings. While the ownership of all school land remains in the hands of the Roman Catholic Trust Corporation (RCTC), a Right to Use Land and Buildings Agreement (RULBA) for the use of land between the parish and school is provided by the company and is also a government registration requirement.

Arrangements for the use of shared facilities at each parish and school site have been formalised in a template schedule attached to the RULBA, which includes the overall responsibility of coordinating the usage, maintenance and financial responsibility of all shared facilities.

Should, after the formal establishment of the use of shared facilities, the parish priest or school principal wish to change current arrangements regarding use of land and buildings, this must be worked out at a local level between parish and school. This new formalised agreement will replace the schedule attached to the RULBA.

Given the changing demographic of the Archdiocese, parishes and schools will inevitably change in structure. In some instances, parishes or schools will amalgamate as the Archdiocese determines the best way to respond to its mission of meeting the spiritual, pastoral and educational needs of the faithful. In some areas schools will need to close, while in growth areas new schools will develop.

As education is central to the ministry of the Catholic Church at both archdiocesan and parish level, these changes will need to keep in mind what the Statement of Mission reminds us: that a Catholic school is actively embedded in the life of the faith communities of the local Church. Addressing these changing parish and school needs will necessitate close collaboration between MACS, CAM and its parishes, and the RCTC if the education ministry is to flourish.

The Archdiocesan Schools Planning and Collaboration Forum will address the rationalisation of parishes and schools into the future. The forum can also, as required, make recommendations on the changing of current arrangements regarding use of land and buildings in a particular situation.

Given the changing demographic of the Archdiocese, parishes and schools will inevitably change in structure.

Key responsibilities:

- The parish priest is responsible for the patrimony of the parish and school land and buildings.
- Arrangements for the transition agreements for land, buildings and assets have been made.
- A guiding template supports priests and principals in making decisions about shared facilities.
- Any change to current arrangements regarding use of land and buildings in a particular situation, must be worked out at a local level between parish and school.
- The Archdiocesan Schools Planning and Collaboration Forum will address the changing structures and needs of parishes and schools.



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SCHOOL ADVISORY COUNCIL MEMBER PROFILES



David Broadbent was born in Sydney, moving to Melbourne towards the end of primary school. Upon completion of a Bachelor of Arts (Honours) and Graduate Diploma of Education, he moved to Alice Springs for his first teaching position at Catholic High School (now OLSH College).

In 1997, David returned to Melbourne for a position at Marcellin College. During this time, David and his wife Anne were blessed with three daughters. He completed a Master of Education and also served as President of the Victorian Independent Education Union Secondary Schools Council. In 2006, David accepted a role at Parade College as Director of Teaching & Learning.

David was appointed Assistant Principal Learning of Nazareth College in 2014. In 2020, David moved to the P-12 Marymede Catholic College, South Morang, holding Deputy Principal portfolios in Wellbeing and Operations, and in Professional Culture.

David has held roles on the Integrated Catholic Online Network (ICON) Learning Expert Group and as co-convenor of CEM Southern Region Curriculum Leaders Forum. Elected to the Victorian Catholic Secondary Schools Deputy Principals Association in 2017, he served five years as Secretary. David is particularly interested in contemporary learning models, specialising in Learning Technologies and positive behaviour systems (PBL/SWPBS). He has implemented programs to innovative the creative use of learning technology and believes that positive teacher-student relationships are critical in improving student learning and wellbeing outcomes.

David was appointed as Principal of Aquinas College in 2024. David and Anne are members of St Martin of Tours Parish, Rosanna/Macleod.



Rev Dispin John is the Parish Priest of Mitcham and Ringwood and is the Canonical Administrator of Aquinas College. Dispin joined Mitcham Parish and the Aquinas community in 2017.



Andrew Conway is the Group CEO of the Institute of Public Accountants, with an academic background in secondary teaching, commerce and artificial intelligence. He holds an appointment as an Adjunct Professor at Deakin Business School and is a Professor of Accounting (honoris causa) at Shanghai University of Finance and leads small business research. Andrew is the Chair of our School Advisory Council. He has previously been Chair of the Holy Spirit Primary School Advisory Council, Chair of the Holy Spirit Parish Pastoral Council and is involved in a number of other community organisations in the area. Andrew is experienced in corporate governance, as a previous Board Director of Eastern Health, a current Board Member of Western Health (appointment by the Victorian Governor) and a member of the Australian Government's Tax Practitioner's Board.

Andrew is passionate about supporting the development and growth of Aquinas College. Andrew and his wife, Amanda, are ex-collegians and have three children, all of whom are current students at the college





Richard Coker is a Fellow of CPA Australia and an Associate of the Chartered Institute of Management Accountants (CIMA). Richard was appointed as Acting Business Manager in November 2023 and Business Manager in 2025.

Richard is experienced in Catholic Education as a previous Finance Manager at Xavier College Kew and Executive Manager, Products at the Melbourne Catholic Development Fund.

Richard has a passion for school improvement and financial wellbeing for Catholic schools. Richard enjoys supporting Arsenal FC, French and Roman military history and walking.



Dave Mutimer is the Principal of St James, Vermont and joined the Board in 2020. Dave's role on the Aquinas College Board is that of Primary Principal's Representative.

Dave has a passion for School Improvement and Student Wellbeing and has studied at a Post Graduate level in this field. He sees enhancing the link between primary and secondary education as vital in supporting student success both as academic learners and as responsible citizens in the community.

Dave is married with four children who are currently studying at University or attending Secondary School. He loves sport, plays veterans cricket, golf and remains involved in local footy at the East Burwood Football Club.



Jendi Hall represents our parents and is joining the School Advisory Council in 2025. She and Mark have two children attending the school in 2025, one in year 9 and one in year 11, with their older sister a previous graduate of MacKillop College in Werribee and Deakin University Geelong. Jendi graduated a combined Deakin/Monash Degree in 2000 with a background in Science, and completed a Post Graduate Degree in Secondary Education and Teaching in 2001. Since then she has worked exclusively within the Government, specifically the Emergency Services Communications sector, heading into her 25th year delivering Operational and Technical Change to meet the needs of the Victorian Emergency Services Agencies and wider community. Her favourite pastime is reading and enjoying family time at home when not driving around delivering her kids to their various social and sporting commitments!



Royal Castellino represents Our Lady's Parish Ringwood and joined the School Advisory Council in November 2023. He, along with Preethica, has two lovely daughters: Elsa and Ellie. Elsa is currently in Year 10 at Aquinas. Royal graduated with a degree in commerce from the University of Mumbai in 2003, but his passion for software engineering prompted him to transition into the IT field. With extensive experience in software testing, he excels at uncovering bugs in software. Presently, he holds the position of Senior Test Engineer in the Aeronautical domain. Additionally, Royal actively participates in Our Lady's Parish Ringwood, volunteering to operate laptops during masses. In his leisure time, he indulges in cricket, playing the guitar, and enjoys bike rides.



Michael Watt is the Principal of St Clement of Rome Primary School in Bulleen and joins the School Advisory Council in 2025. He and his wife, Natasha, are proud parents to their three children: Nevaya, Frankie, and Ajay. Michael has a long-standing connection to the East Ringwood Cricket Club, where he played for many years and is now actively involved in supporting the junior program. A passionate supporter of St Kilda Football Club, Michael enjoys exercising, watching movies, listening to music, and spending quality time socialising with family and friends.



Kerry Elliott is a Senior Research Fellow in the area of Teaching, Learning and Leadership at the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER). She completed her PhD at the University of Melbourne, which focused on performance and development in Victorian Government schools and the factors contributing to successful implementation. Kerry is taking on a parent representative role on the School Advisory Council. She has over 20 years experience working in education contexts across Australia, including as a teacher, school leader and a university lecturer. She is passionate about helping others succeed and leads numerous programs supporting school systems across Australia, and internationally. Kerry's two children attend Aquinas College. When she's not working, she enjoys travelling, cooking, reading and spending time with family and friends.



Sharon Daley has worked in Catholic Education for over 25 years. In 2022 Sharon was appointed Director, Students Services which includes leading the Health Centre and the Youth and Family Centre. Sharon has a passion for student wellbeing and is currently completing a Masters of Education in this area at University of Melbourne. She has qualifications in career counselling and student counselling. Sharon is also a proud parent of two former Aquinas students. When Sharon is not studying and working, she enjoys watching movies, walking and playing with her fur-baby Ruby, beach days, picnics and dinners with family and friends.



Daniel Rogers is in Year 12 and is studying History: Revolutions, Politics, Economics, General English and English Literature this year. Outside of school he is very interested in History and literature, literature meaning he reads a lot for fun. Daniel used to be in the Navy Cadets and now keeps up with football (soccer) worldwide and supports Tottenham who he states are generally terrible. Next year Daniel would like to go to a university to study History in conjunction with economics or do some kind of English subject for a double degree. He also enjoys writing so may end up doing something there!

SCHOOL ADVISORY COUNCIL OFFICE BEARERS



Office Bearers

President Canonical Administrators:	Rev Dispin John
Chairperson:	Mr Andrew Conway
Principal:	Mr David Broadbent

College Board Executive

President Canonical Administrators:	Rev Dispin John
Principal:	Mr David Broadbent
Chairperson:	Mr Andrew Conway

SCHOOL ADVISORY COUNCIL GOALS



Communication

- * Communicating AQSAC achievements to the community per term via the Lighthouse and linking these to the AAP.
- * Communicating progress with the SAM Capital Project to the community.

Capital Projects:

- * Establishing the next phase in the master plan based on school priorities.
- * Investigate sustainability and inclusivity initiatives.

Community Engagement

- * AQSAC to identify opportunities for community engagement to be referred to AP Mission.

FINANCE AND RISK MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE



Introduction

Clause 14.1 of the Constitution for Aquinas College Ringwood indicates that the Board shall appoint a finance committee to assist the Principal in the financial management of the College.

Membership

The Aquinas College Board has agreed the following protocols in regard to membership that are in keeping with Clause 14.1 of the Constitution;

Chairperson:	Mr Andrew Conway
President of the Canonical Administrators:	Rev Dispin John
College Principal:	Mr David Broadbent
Parent Representative:	Ms Kerry Elliot
College Acting Business Manager:	Mr Richard Coker

Meetings

The School Advisory Council Finance Committee meets five times per year.

Committee Protocols

The committee protocols are in line with Section 14 of the Constitution Clauses 14.1 – Clause 14.6. Meeting papers are received in the week prior to the meeting and the meeting format is outlined below.

Meeting Format

The common meeting agenda is framed with the first four items fixed – Attendance, Minutes of the Previous Meeting, Finance Reports and Debtors. The committee would then go on to discuss any projects with financial implications that are in planning or underway and also look at other minor capital work expenditures and any required expenditure that is not part of the annual budget.

Policy

College expenditure greater than \$25,000 that is not part of the annual budget must be presented for approval at a meeting of the School Advisory Council Finance Committee prior to formalising expenditure. On occasions the Business Manager will email the members of the committee to seek the necessary authorisation where this is a matter of urgency.

Minutes

The College Business Manager is responsible for the preparation of agenda and minutes of all meetings.

Relationship to the Board

On behalf of the School Advisory Council Finance Committee the College Business Manager who is present at meetings, but not a member of the School Advisory Council, presents a summary report of all Finance Committee meetings.

SCHOOL ADVISORY COUNCIL DATES 2026



2026	School Advisory Council Dates	Finance Meetings
<i>Term 1</i>	<p>Meeting 1: Tuesday 17 February</p> <p>Meeting 2: Tuesday 24 March</p>	Finance & Risk #1: Thursday 5 March
<i>Term 2</i>	<p>Meeting 3: Tuesday 5 May</p> <p>Meeting 4: Tuesday 16 June</p>	
<i>Term 3</i>	<p>Seminar: Tuesday 28 July</p> <p>Meeting 5: Tuesday 25 August</p>	Finance & Risk #2: Tuesday 8 September
<i>Term 4</i>	<p>Meeting 6: Tuesday 20 October</p>	

FORMATION SEMINARS 2014–2025



Date	2014
Theme	CIS (5 Year Review)
Presenter	Janet Blackwell
Topic	Preparation of the College Board for the CIS 5 Year Review in 2015.
Comments	<i>Members thanked Janet for her leadership in guiding the College through the accreditation process.</i>
Date	2015
Theme	Improving Student Learning
Presenters	Pam Ryan and Meredith Greenwood
Topic	Instruction to the College Board on the principles of Visible Learning and Positive Education philosophies and how these are being implemented at the College.
Comments	<i>Members appreciated the expert explanations to outline these key principles underlying the College's School Improvement Plan for Learning.</i>
Date	2016
Theme	Enhancing Student Wellbeing
Presenters	Cheryl Kane, Denise Bowley and Kylie Lloyd
Topic	Presentations outlining the College's approaches to Child Safety in the curriculum, Educational Support Services and mental health support.
Comments	<i>Members were most impressed with the scope of the services offered by the College in support of students and families with social-emotional or special learning needs.</i>
Date	2017
Theme	Vocational Pathways for Students
Presenter	Owen Stott
Topic	Participation in a workshop in the Wurundjeri Trade Training Centre on the VET Hospitality program offered at the College.
Comments	<i>Members commented that this was a most enjoyable seminar because of its practical nature and were reassured that the College offered a pathway for all students.</i>
Date	2018
Theme	Learning from the Royal Commission into Institutional Child Sexual Abuse
Presenter	John Crowley
Topic	A very personal insight from the Principal of St Patrick's College, Ballarat into the impact of the Royal Commission on his community.
Comments	<i>Members were greatly affected by John's presentation as he spoke of the challenges in working to support victims/survivors of abuse and the advice that he would offer others in leadership of Catholic schools.</i>
Date	2019
Theme	AHISA Chair, Board and Heads Forum
Presenters	Presenters include Ben Tallboys (Principal, Russell Kennedy Lawyers), Elizabeth Jameson (Director, Board Matters) and Sam Elam (Managing Director, School Manoeuvres).
Topic	The half day program seeks to address the critical incidents that are faced by Heads and Boards through the sharing of real life experiences of members, along with the wisdom of experts in the field of law, governance and media.
Comments	-

Date	2020
Theme	The Spirit of Aquinas Program
Presenter	Tania Grace
Topic	
Comments	
Date	2021
Theme	School Improvement Plan, CIS
Presenters	Michael Box
Topic	
Comments	
Date	2023
Theme	School Review
Presenters	Vicki Myers - MACS, Jane Tobler CIS Coordinator
Topic	Renewing our College
Comments	
Date	2024
Theme	School Fee Structure and forward planning
Presenters	David Broadbent and Richard Coker
Topic	College growth
Comments	
Date	2025
Theme	School Budgeting
Presenters	David Broadbent and Richard Coker
Topic	Forward planning
Comments	

DECLARATION OF GOOD CHARACTER



Answer ALL the following questions by crossing the correct box. Then date and sign the declaration.

To be completed by the proprietor, all governing body members and the school principal. A principal means a person appointed to the position as principal of a registered school or a person in charge of a registered school (the Act section 1.1.3).

Have you been found guilty of an offence which involved theft, dishonesty or fraud? Yes No

Have you been found guilty of an indictable offence which is, or which would if committed in Victoria be, an indictable offence? Yes No

Have you obtained education qualifications through dishonesty or assisted others to obtain education qualifications through dishonesty? Yes No

Are you, or have you been subject to, an order or a law disqualifying you from being employed by or involved in managing a school? Yes No

Are you the subject of current disciplinary action in any professional or occupational capacity? Yes No

Have you been the subject of disciplinary action in any professional or occupational capacity that involved a finding of guilt? Yes No

Have you ever engaged with teaching? Yes No

(i) when not registered as a teacher as required under the laws of the relevant country? or

(ii) if registered as a teacher, contravened a condition, limitation or restriction on which your registration was granted?

Are you or have you ever been bankrupt or have you taken the benefit of any law for the relief of bankrupt debtors, or compounded with your creditors or made an assignment of your property for your benefit? Yes No

If you answered 'yes' to any question, please provide further details on a separate sheet of paper and attach it to this declaration.

DECLARED on the _____ day of _____ 20_____

(day, month and year)

by _____

(name of person signing)

the _____

(title of person signing)

with the authority of and for and on behalf of _____

(name of school)

X _____

(signature of person making declaration)



AQUINAS COLLEGE VISION AND MISSION

Vision

Inspired by Gospel values and mindful of our Catholic identity, our Vision is to ignite the fire of learning and shine as a beacon of excellence, hope and love in the world.

'Illuminare et Ardere'

Mission

Our Mission is to promote quality education while developing an awareness of God in our lives, the value and connectedness of all human relationships, a sense of justice, a hopeful spirit and a love of learning.

We proclaim this Mission at Aquinas College by embracing six Core Values:

- **Spirituality:** we nurture a connectedness to God and a Catholic faith that is informed by scripture, tradition and the regional parish communities.
- **Belonging:** mindful of our diverse local and global community; we are culturally inclusive and respect the dignity of each individual.
- **Perseverance:** we are challenged to continually strive for excellence in all aspects of our learning.
- **Compassion:** we promote the service of others through education and experiences that are based on kindness and generosity informed by Catholic Social Teaching.
- **Stewardship:** we encourage our community to respond to the need for sustainability in our contemporary world in the light of the Gospel and its call to action.
- **Justice:** we promote opportunity and equity through awareness and support of the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights.

Each Core Value will be explored in a six year cycle and provide a focus to embrace our potential and further understand our opportunities, both personally and as a community, to “light up and be on fire”.

ATTRIBUTES OF AN AQUINAS COLLEGE STUDENT



At Aquinas College we are committed to educating our students to take their place in a global environment and to view the world from multiple perspectives with an awareness of God in their lives and guided by the virtues taught by our College Patron, St Thomas Aquinas, and our College values - spirituality, belonging, perseverance, compassion, stewardship and justice.

An Aquinas student will graduate as a Global Citizen with embedded competencies that embody the following attributes:

- They will be an **effective communicator** by being literate and numerate.
- They will be **fluent in 21st century digital technology** by being collaborative, creative and ethical in their use of ICT.
- They will be an **inquirer** with a sense of their own spirituality, social attributes and intellect to think critically and contribute in matters of global significance.
- They will be **open minded, adaptable and considerate** of multiple perspectives.
- They will be **courageous** and leave Aquinas independent, resilient and ready to participate fully in the world with respect for others.
- They will be a **sustainability advocate** with an appreciation of the world they inhabit and capacity to affect change both locally and globally.
- They will be **health conscious** and able to promote good personal and collective physical and mental wellbeing.
- Demonstrate an understanding of **intercultural competencies** and their importance as a global citizen.



Introduction

Aquinas College is a school which operates with the consent of the Catholic Archbishop of Melbourne and is owned, operated, and governed by Melbourne Archdiocese Catholic Schools Ltd (MACS).

As a MACS college:

- prayer and liturgy are vital aspects of religious life in the college
- the pastoral care and support programs for students, families and staff are based on the teachings of the Catholic Church
- the teachings and values of the Catholic Church are paramount.

Purpose

This policy sets out the requirements for enrolment in our school in line with the Enrolment Policy for MACS schools.

Scope

This policy applies to all families seeking to enrol students at Aquinas College.

Principles

The following principles underpin this policy:

- MACS colleges are established primarily for Catholic children, Aquinas College strives to be open and welcome to all Catholic students regardless of their background and does everything reasonable to accommodate each student's individual needs.
- Enrolment of children of other Christian traditions and faiths is open; however, priority will be given to children from non-Catholic Eastern churches.
- Children from other religious traditions, or no religion, are provided with the opportunity to enrol at our school should they choose to apply and there is sufficient capacity within the school.
- Parents/guardians/carers are the first educators of their children. By enrolling a child in our college, parents/guardians/carers are entering into a partnership to promote and support their child's education, in particular their education in faith. While the college promotes access to a Catholic education through the school enrolment policy, it is the responsibility of parents/guardians/carers to support the school in furthering the spiritual and academic life of their child.

Policy

Priority enrolment

Local pastoral discretion is an important element of decision-making regarding enrolment at Aquinas College. While the priority of the principal is to enrol the children of Catholic parents/guardians/carers, pastoral discretion may be exercised in enrolment decisions where deemed appropriate.

Where established, the local college enrolment committee will formally endorse all enrolment decisions to ensure transparency and equity in decision-making. Where a local school enrolment committee is not established, the principal will endorse all enrolment decisions.

Order of priority

There is an agreed order of priority for enrolment in MACS schools, which must be followed in the enrolment policy and procedures. As systemic Catholic schools, the priority of MACS schools is the provision of a Catholic education for Catholic children.

The order of priority for MACS secondary colleges is:

1. Catholic children who are residents of a designated priority parish and have attended a Catholic primary school in one of those parishes
2. Siblings of children already enrolled in the school
3. Catholic children who are residents of a designated priority parish and have not attended a Catholic primary school
4. Catholic children from other parishes (for pastoral reasons)
5. Children from non-Catholic Eastern churches (i.e. Greek Orthodox, Coptic Orthodox, Ukrainian Orthodox, Russian Orthodox, Serbian Orthodox and other Orthodox) who have attended a Catholic primary school and are residents of a priority parish
6. Children from non-Catholic Eastern churches (i.e. Greek Orthodox, Coptic Orthodox, Ukrainian Orthodox, Russian Orthodox, Serbian Orthodox and other Orthodox) who have not attended a Catholic primary school and are residents of a priority parish
7. Other Christian children who have attended a Catholic primary school and are residents of a priority parish
8. Other Christian children who have not attended a Catholic primary school and are residents of a priority parish
9. Non-Christian children who have attended a Catholic primary school and are residents of a priority parish
10. Non-Christian children who have not attended a Catholic primary school and are residents of a priority parish.

Overseas Students

When considering the enrolment of students on visa, principal of Aquinas College will consider the application with reference to MACS policy and procedures as well as legislative requirements. The principal or delegate is to determine whether the student is fee-liable or eligible for government funding through outlined processes.

Parent/Guardian/Carer responsibilities

At the time of enrolment, parents/guardians/carers make a commitment to provide ongoing support for their child's Catholic education. Parents/guardians/carers are asked to make an explicit commitment to the following responsibilities:

- Complete the school's enrolment form and ensure it is returned by the due date. This does not guarantee enrolment in the school, which is confirmed following the signing of the enrolment agreement as formal acceptance of the offer of enrolment.
- Be prepared to support the school in the Catholic education of their child and involve themselves as much as possible as well as committing to adhering to the expected standards of parental/guardian/carers behaviour as outlined in the school's Parent/Guardian/Carer Code of Conduct.
- Acknowledge and commit to meeting the financial responsibilities arising from the ongoing enrolment of their child at Aquinas College. Any difficulties in meeting this commitment should be discussed with the principal.
- Advise the principal of any court order, parenting or custodial arrangement/s that may exist in relation to their child, or any changes to such order/s, and provide a copy of the court order/s and any subsequent changes for the child's school file.
- Provide the school with an immunisation history statement from the Australian Immunisation Register.
- Provide up to date evidence of visa status from the Department of Home Affairs as soon as notified where applicable.

Termination of enrolment

Parents/guardians/carers are, as a condition of enrolment, expected to read, sign, and comply with the Aquinas College Enrolment Agreement, Aquinas College Parent/Guardian/Carer Code of Conduct (**Code of Conduct**), and relevant school policies.

Parents/guardians/carers who breach this Code, Agreement, and/or policies will be contacted by the principal. Appropriate action, which may include limiting or reducing access to the school grounds, attending school functions or school-based activities or, setting mandatory parameters around methods and timing of

ENROLMENT PROCEDURE YEARS 8 TO 12



Rationale

Aquinas College was established to provide a Catholic secondary education to families within the neighbouring Catholic parishes. Enrolment entry at years 8-12 is dependent upon vacancies and is subject to meeting certain criteria.

Aim

To provide opportunity for students to enter Aquinas College subject to interview by the Director of Middle Years and Director of Senior Years in an endeavour to maximise student numbers in each year level.

Implementation

The following guidelines will provide assistance when offering enrolment placements for vacancies at Years 8-12. Subject to availability and interview, enrolment offers will be made keeping in mind the following order of entry:

Category 1	Catholic students enrolled in a Catholic secondary school, and having attended a Catholic primary school.
Category 2	Catholic students enrolled in a Catholic secondary school with a primary education other than Catholic
Category 3	Catholic students enrolled in a non-Catholic secondary school
Category 4	Non-Catholic students enrolled in a Catholic secondary school
Category 5	Non-Catholic students enrolled in a non-Catholic secondary school

Consideration will be given to students making an application with a sibling already enrolled at Aquinas. Students enrolled at a Catholic School in the Melbourne Archdiocese should be considered by negotiated transfer between the relevant Principals unless there are exceptional circumstances.

In the Senior Years, the College does not necessarily replace a student who leaves as there is an operational need for natural attrition of students so that specialist programs can be accommodated.

The Principal reserves the right to offer placement to an applicant within any of the categories (2) – (5) if it is felt that it is in the interest of the applicant and College to do so.



Aquinas College is a college which operates with the consent of the Catholic Archbishop of Melbourne and is owned, operated and governed by Melbourne Archdiocese Catholic Schools Ltd (MACS). This agreement aligns with Aquinas College Enrolment Policy and MACS Enrolment Framework.

Please read the terms and conditions outlined below before signing the agreement. Confirmation of enrolment offer requires the acceptance and signing of the Enrolment Agreement.

Terms and Conditions of Enrolment

1. Education services

- 1.1. Catholic education is intrinsic to the mission of the Church. It is one means by which the Church fulfils its role in assisting people to discover and embrace the fullness of life in Christ. MACS colleges offer a broad, comprehensive curriculum imbued with an authentic Catholic understanding of Christ and his teaching, as well as a lived appreciation of membership of the Catholic Church.
- 1.2. Catholic education services includes:
 - 1.2.1. targeted support to students assessed by the school as requiring additional assistance with literacy and numeracy. The degree of support provided will be determined with consideration of the number of students who would benefit from assistance and the resources available to the school.
 - 1.2.2. targeted support to students assessed by the school as requiring assistance with social and emotional development. The degree of support provided will be determined with consideration of the number of students who would benefit from assistance and the resources available to the school.
- 1.3. Parents, guardians and carers, as the first educators of their children, enter into a partnership with the college to promote and support their child's education. Parents/guardians/carers must assume responsibility for maintaining this partnership by supporting the college in the provision of education to their children within the scope of college's registration and furthering the spiritual and academic life of their children.

2. Enrolment

- 2.1 Parents/guardians/carers are required to provide information about their child during the enrolment procedure, both at the application stage and if the college offers your child a place. Please note that lodgement of the enrolment form does not guarantee enrolment at the college.
If the information requested is not provided, the college may not be able to enrol your child.
- 2.2 To meet MACS and government requirements, parents/guardians/carers will need to provide the college with a completed enrolment form including, among other things, the information listed below:
 - evidence of your child's date of birth (e.g. birth certificate, passport)
 - religious denomination
 - previous college reports (if applicable)
 - names and addresses of the child and parents/guardians/carers; telephone numbers (home, work, mobile) of parents/guardians/carers
 - names of emergency contacts and their details
 - specific residence arrangements

- information about the language/s your child speaks and/or hears at home
- nationality and/or citizenship including the visa sub-class granted upon entry to Australia (prior to citizenship being granted), where applicable
- doctor's name and telephone number
- diagnoses, medical conditions, health needs and immunisation history
- information on known additional learning needs (e.g. whether your child requires additional support in relation to mobility, language, social skills development, welfare needs, challenging behaviours, adjustments to the curriculum, etc.)
- parenting agreements or court orders, including any guardianship orders.

After lodgement of the enrolment form, college staff may need to request further information, for example in relation to any parenting orders, medical conditions or additional learning needs that have been noted on the enrolment form. In addition, it is often useful for parents/guardians/carers to attend a meeting with college staff prior to enrolment to discuss any additional needs your child may have. An interpreter may be organised, if required.

- 2.3 Subject to any special exercise of discretion by MACS, the order of priority for enrolment in MACS colleges is detailed in the college's Enrolment Policy.

3. Fees

- 3.1 The setting of the levels of fees, levies and other compulsory ad hoc charges in MACS colleges is the responsibility of the school within the prescribed requirements of MACS, considering the allocation of government funds. School fees generally cover most curriculum-related activities. In some cases, additional costs may be required for some excursions, camps, activities, and programs. Where additional levies and charges are required, the school informs parents/guardians/carers of cost details in advance.
- 3.2 The school offers a number of methods for paying fees, levies and ad hoc charges to reduce any financial burden and to assist financial planning. If you have difficulty in meeting the required payment of fees, levies and ad hoc charges, you are welcome to discuss this with the principal of the school.
- 3.3 Parents/guardians/carers are responsible for the payment of all fees, levies and charges associated with the student's enrolment and attendance at the school, as contained in the school's Fees, Levies and Charges Schedule provided to parents/guardians/carers from time to time. The fees must be paid for a child to enrol and to continue enrolment at the school. The school has discretion over whether to allow a student to participate in optional or extracurricular school events, such as paid school excursions or extracurricular activities, while fees remain due and payable.

4. Enrolment with reference to maximum age exemption

- 4.1 The college's enrolment policies and procedures are intended to ensure that, when enrolling students, MACS schools are compliant with relevant Victorian and Australian government legislation. Generally, a person who is aged over 18 years must not be enrolled at, or allowed to attend a MACS school, or participate in any program or course conducted unless they:
- have been granted an exemption by the MACS Executive Director or delegate
 - fall within an exception to the maximum age requirements.
- 4.2 Approval for maximum age exemptions will only be granted in exceptional circumstances.
- 4.3 Application for maximum age exemption should be made on the *Maximum Age Exemption Application Form* and submitted to the MACS Regional General Manager for approval by the Executive Director (or delegate).

5. Child safe environment

- 5.1 Catholic college communities have a moral, legal and mission-driven responsibility to create nurturing college environments where children are respected, their voices are heard, and where they are safe and feel safe.

- 5.2 Every person involved in Catholic education, including all parents/guardians/carers at our college, has a responsibility to understand the importance and specific role they play individually and collectively to ensure that the wellbeing and safety of all children is at the forefront of all they do and every decision they make.
- 5.3 The college's child safe policies, codes of conduct and practices set out the commitment to child safety, and the processes for identifying, communicating, reporting and addressing concerning behaviour and allegations of child abuse. These documents establish clear expectations for all staff and volunteers for appropriate behaviour with students to safeguard them against abuse.
- 5.4 The college has established human resources practices where newly recruited staff, existing staff and volunteers in the college understand the importance of child safety, are trained to minimise the risk of child abuse, and are aware of the college's relevant policies and procedures. The college also provides ongoing training, supervision and monitoring of staff to ensure that they are suitable to work with students as part of our human resources practices.
- 5.5 The college has robust, structured risk management processes as prescribed by MACS that help establish and maintain a child safe environment, which involves consideration of possible broad-based risk factors across a wide range of contexts, environments, relationships and activities with which students within our college engage.
- 5.6 The college, in partnership with families, ensures children and young people are engaged and are active participants in decision-making processes, particularly those that may have an impact on their safety. This means that the views of staff, children, young people and families are taken seriously and their concerns are addressed in a just and timely manner.
- 5.7 The college's child safety policies and procedures are readily available and accessible. Further details on MACS' and the Catholic education community's commitment to child safety across Victoria can be accessed at:
 - the Catholic Education Commission of Victoria Ltd child safety page www.cecv.catholic.edu.au/Our-Schools/Child-Safety
 - the Catholic Education Commission of Victoria Ltd Statement of Commitment to Child Safety <https://www.cecv.catholic.edu.au/getmedia/b5d43278-51b9-4704-b45a-f14e50546a70/Commitment-Statement-A4.aspx> (available in English, Arabic, Simplified Chinese, Tagalog, and Vietnamese)
 - the MACS child safety page www.macs.vic.edu.au/Our-Schools/Child-Safety.aspx.

6. Period of Enrolment

- 6.1 The enrolment of the student, once approved by the principal of the college, commences in the entry year, and continues until the completion of the last year at the college or until the student's enrolment is otherwise withdrawn or terminated.

7. Policies and procedures

- 7.1 All the college's enrolment policies and procedures are available on the college website. For the purposes of this agreement, a reference to college's Policies and Procedures also includes processes, guidelines, and any other applicable governance documentation.
- 7.2 The parents/guardians/carers must comply with and take all reasonable steps to uphold the college's policies and procedures, as introduced or amended from time to time, including those concerning or dealing with:
 - (a) the care, safety and welfare of students
 - (b) standards of dress, grooming and appearance
 - (c) grievance and complaints
 - (d) social media and the use of information, communication, and technology systems
 - (e) student behaviour and conduct and discipline of students
 - (f) parent behaviour and conduct, including any Parent/Guardian/Carer Code of Conduct as may be published from time to time
 - (g) privacy.

- 7.3 The college has absolute discretion in all its operational and educational matters and offerings as determined by its governing body, MACS, and subject to relevant delegations to the principal of the college.

8. Terms of enrolment regarding acceptable behaviour or conduct

- 8.1 The college is a community that exemplifies the gospel values of love, forgiveness, justice and truth. The college community recognises that everyone has the right to be respected, to feel safe and be safe; and, in this regard, understands their rights and acknowledges their obligation to behave responsibly.
- 8.2 Every person at the college has a right to feel safe, to be happy and to learn, therefore we aim to:
- promote the values of honesty, fairness and respect for others
 - acknowledge the worth of all members of the community and their right to work and learn in a positive environment
 - maintain good order and harmony
 - affirm cooperation as well as responsible independence in learning
 - foster self-discipline and develop responsibility for one's own behaviour.
- 8.3 MACS and the college administration, in consultation with the college community wherever appropriate, will prescribe standards of dress, appearance and behaviour for the student body, taking into consideration the student's aboriginal, cultural, religious or diverse backgrounds or circumstances.
- 8.4 As a term of your child's enrolment, parents/guardians/carers agree that the student is required to comply with the college's behaviour aims and code of conduct, and to support the college in upholding prescribed standards of dress, appearance and behaviour and ensure compliance with the Code of Conduct for Students.
- 8.5 The parents/guardians/carers agree to be responsible for ensuring that the student is aware of all policies and procedures that apply to the student, including those relating to the student conduct and behaviour and any code of conduct for students, and to actively support the college in the implementation of such policies, procedures and codes of conduct.
- 8.6 The parents/guardians/carers agree to comply with any code of conduct for parents/guardians/ carers or other policy implemented by the college from time to time which sets out the college's expectations of parents/guardians/carers who have a student enrolled at the college.
- 8.7 The parents/guardians/carers agree that any unacceptable behaviour by a child, or significant and/or repeated behaviour by a parent/guardian/carer that, in the college's view, is unacceptable and damaging to the partnership between parent/guardian/carer and college, or otherwise in breach of the student code of conduct or the parent/guardian/carer code of conduct may result in suspension or termination of the student's enrolment.

9. Terms of enrolment regarding conformity with principles of the Catholic faith

- 9.1 As a provider of Catholic education, the principal will take into account the need for the college community to represent and comply with the doctrines, beliefs and principles of the Catholic faith when making decisions regarding matters of college administration, including enrolment. Students and families who are members of other faiths are warmly welcomed at the college. However, MACS reserves the right to exercise administrative discretion in appropriate circumstances to suspend or terminate enrolment, where it is necessary to do so to avoid injury to the religious sensitivities of the Catholic college community.

10. Terms of enrolment regarding provision of accurate information

- 10.1 It is vitally important that the principal is made aware of each student's individual circumstances insofar as these may impact upon their physical, functional, emotional or educational needs, particularly where the college is required to provide additional support to the student.
- 10.2 Parents/guardians/carers must provide accurate and up-to-date information when completing the enrolment form and must supply the college, prior to enrolment, any additional information as may be requested, including copies of documents such as medical/specialist reports (where relevant to the child's schooling), reports from previous schools, court orders or parenting agreements. Provision of requested documentation is regarded as a condition of enrolment, and enrolment may be refused or terminated where a parent/guardian/carer has unreasonably refused to provide requested information or knowingly withheld relevant information from the college.
- 10.3 Where, during the course of a child's enrolment, new information becomes available that is material to the child's educational and/or safety and wellbeing needs, it is a term of the student's continuing enrolment that such information is provided to the college promptly. Non-provision of such information will be treated as breach of these terms and conditions of enrolment.
- 10.4 The provision of an inaccurate residential address or failure to provide an updated residential address for the child will also be treated as a breach of the terms of enrolment.
- 10.5 Any breach of the terms and conditions of enrolment regarding provision of accurate information that is not rectified upon request by the college may result in a suspension or termination of enrolment.

11. Enrolment for children with additional needs

- 11.1 The college welcomes parents/guardians/carers who wish to enrol a child with additional needs and will do everything possible to accommodate the child's needs, provided that an understanding has been reached between the college and parents/guardians/carers prior to enrolment regarding:
 - the nature of any diagnosed or suspected medical condition/disability, or any other circumstances that are relevant to the child's additional learning needs, for example, giftedness or an experience of trauma
 - the nature of any additional assistance that is recommended or appropriate to be provided to the child, for example, medical or specialist equipment, specialist referrals, specific welfare support, modifications to the classroom environment or curriculum, aide assistance, individual education programs, behaviour support plans or other educational interventions as may be relevant
 - the individual physical, functional, emotional or educational goals that are appropriate to the child, and how the parents/guardians/carers and the college will work in partnership to achieve these goals
 - any limitations on the college's ability to provide the additional assistance requested.
- 11.2 The procedure for enrolling students with additional needs is otherwise the same as for enrolling any student.
- 11.3 As every child's educational needs can change over time, it will often be necessary for the college to review any additional assistance that is being provided to the student, in consultation with parents/guardians/carers and the child's treating medical/allied health professionals, to assess whether:
 - the additional assistance remains necessary and/or appropriate to the student's needs
 - the additional assistance is having the anticipated positive effect on the student's individual physical, functional, emotional or educational goals.

It remains within the college's ability to continue to provide the additional assistance, given any limitations that may exist.

- 11.4 To support a child's learning and wellbeing needs, students with additional needs can access school-based and MACS learning diversity assessment consultancy services if

determined as required to clarify their learning profile and build teacher capacity to support student needs. Please refer to the MACS website for further information:

<https://www.macs.vic.edu.au/Our-Schools/Students-with-Diverse-Learning-Needs.aspx>

12. Assessment and updates

12.1 Various opportunities are provided to keep parents/guardians/carers up to date with their child's progress. Two comprehensive written reports will be provided each year and arrangements will be made for at least one interview where parents/guardians/carers can discuss their child's development with their teacher. In addition, a meeting can be arranged if there are any concerns or you wish to receive an update on progress.

13. Discipline

13.1 The college has absolute discretion to determine when student conduct warrants disciplinary action to be taken. The college may apply disciplinary measures that it deems appropriate in accordance with the college's policies and procedures, which may include:

- withdrawal of privileges
- detention at such times as the principal may deem appropriate
- requiring the student to undertake additional college work during or after normal college hours
- suspension
- expulsion
- such other consequences as the college considers reasonable and appropriate.

13.2 Any serious failure by the student to comply with the college's policies and procedures may affect the student's enrolment at the college. The student may be suspended from attending the college, their enrolment may be terminated and/or the college may charge or retain all or part of the fees, levies, or charges for that term.

14. Termination of student's enrolment by the college

14.1 The college reserves the right to require the parents/guardians/carers to withdraw the student from the college or to cancel the student's enrolment at any time if the college reasonably considers that:

- the student's behaviour, attitude or conduct to schoolwork, other college activities or while attending college is unsatisfactory
- the student has demonstrated unsatisfactory conduct or performance, or misconduct
- the student fails to obey the college's policies and procedures or any student code of conduct of the college
- a mutually beneficial relationship of trust and cooperation between the parents/guardians/ carers and the college or any of its staff has broken down to the extent that it adversely impacts on the college, any of its staff or the ability of the college to provide satisfactory educational services to the student
- the student's progress and performance are such that the student is not benefiting from the academic courses provided by the college
- the behaviour or conduct of the parents/guardians/carers towards the college or to any of its staff breaches any Parent/Guardian/Carer Code of Conduct
- if any accounts or fees payable by the parents/guardians/carers are not paid within the college's terms of payment or within the terms of any written agreement between the college and the parents/guardians/carers permitting a later or deferred payment
- circumstances exist whereby the ongoing enrolment of the student at the college is considered to be untenable or is not in the best interests of the student or the college.

15. Appeal process on enrolment decisions

- 15.1 Aquinas College is required to maintain a fair, effective, and efficient complaints-handling process so that complaints about enrolment and other matters at the college can be addressed.
- 15.2 If a parent/ guardian of the student would like to make an appeal about the enrolment process and/or enrolment decision, consider raising the concerns to the principal or relevant person either in writing or by making an appointment. Please ensure the relevant person/s is given a reasonable amount of time to take the steps required to resolve or address the concerns. Please refer to Aquinas College's complaints handling policy or guidelines for further information.
- 15.3 If the matter cannot be resolved at the college level, complainants are advised to contact the relevant MACS Regional Office. Alternatively, parents/guardians/carers may lodge a complaint online and read the MACS Complaint Handling policy at <https://www.macs.vic.edu.au/Contact-Us/Complaints.aspx>.

16. General

- 16.1 This enrolment agreement constitutes the sole and entire agreement between the parents/guardians/carers and MACS in relation to the enrolment of the student at the college.
- 16.2 The parents/guardian/carers acknowledge that MACS may from time to time vary the terms and conditions of this enrolment agreement. The related policies and Codes of Conduct are published on the school website. The school will notify parents when they have been updated.
- 16.3 Parents/guardians/carers acknowledge that a student's enrolment at the college and this agreement with MACS may be terminated in the event of a material breach of this agreement or where the application of one of the college's policies and procedures necessitates or permits such termination.
- 16.4 Any warranty, representation, guarantee or other term or condition whatsoever that is not contained in this agreement is excluded and is of no force or effect.
- 16.5 The agreement is governed by the laws of the State of Victoria, Australia.

Acceptance of enrolment

- By signing this Enrolment Agreement, I acknowledge that I enter into an agreement with Melbourne Archdiocese Catholic Colleges Ltd (MACS), as the owner and governing authority for the college, and I understand and accept the terms and conditions of enrolment as set out in this Enrolment Agreement. I agree that there are certain expectations, obligations and guarantees required of parents/guardians/carers of the college's students, so that a harmonious relationship may be established.
- I accept the offer of enrolment of my child at the college in the entry year and entry level noted on the enrolment application form.
- I will support and abide by all MACS and college policies and procedures (including processes, guidelines and other governance documentation), as amended from time to time, in relation to programs of studies, sports, pastoral care, college uniform, acceptable behaviour, child safety, discipline and general operations of the college.
- I will ensure that the information I have provided is kept up-to-date throughout the period of enrolment and I will notify the college promptly of any changes to that information (e.g. change of residential address, changes to parenting orders).
- I will pay the current college fees and levies for my child and also pay any variation or increase of fees and levies as required by the college, or I will otherwise notify the college immediately if I am experiencing financial difficulties.
- I will support my child's participation in the religious life of the college (e.g. college liturgies, retreat programs).
- I will attend parent/teacher and information evenings which relate to my child.
- I will participate in a working bee once a year or make a financial contribution.

- In the event I have any concerns, I will raise them initially with the relevant teacher or the college principal.
- I will treat all members of the college community with respect as befits a Catholic college.
- If in time of emergencies, accidents, or serious illness I cannot be contacted, I give permission for the principal (or their representative) to seek medical attention for my child as required (which may include transportation to the nearest hospital, medical centre or doctor by ambulance or private vehicle). I also understand that the signatories below are required to meet any costs incurred.
- As a parent/guardian/carer, I will support the vision of MACS, the college and parish. In accepting the enrolment, I agree to abide by all MACS and college policies and procedures which are reviewed regularly and may be subject to change at the college's discretion. I will work with the college to support the academic/social/behavioural needs of my child. I understand that the consequence of not complying with MACS' and the college's policies and procedures may result in the termination of the enrolment.
- I have read and understand the Parent/Guardian/Carer Code of Conduct and the criteria for termination of enrolment as provided for in the Aquinas College policies and/or procedures, and agree to comply with expected parent/guardian/carer behaviour and conduct, including any Parent/Guardian/Carer Code of Conduct as published from time to time on the school's website and notified to parents.
- I accept that my child will read and understand the Student Code of Conduct and agree to comply with expected student behaviour and conduct, including any Student Code of Conduct as may be published from time to time on the school's website and notified to parents.
- I understand that if any misleading information has been provided, or any omission of significant information is made in the application for enrolment, acceptance will not be granted; or, if discovered after acceptance, enrolment may be withdrawn.

Parent/guardian/carer A

signature

Date:

Parent/guardian/carer B

signature

Date:

Student signature

Date:

Disclaimer: Personal information will be held, used and disclosed in accordance with the MACS Privacy Collection Notice and Privacy Policy enclosed in the enrolment pack and available on the college website www.aquinas.vic.edu.au

COLLEGE COMMUNICATION WITH NON-CUSTODIAL GUARDIANS



Rationale

This policy is to be read in conjunction with the Aquinas College Enrolment Policy.

The College sees fair dealing with all guardians as important, both as a matter of justice and in the interest of the child.

The College would therefore want to support students and all guardians in strengthening this relationship. However, for practical reasons the College will normally prefer to direct key correspondence to one address only. The College requests families nominate one guardian as the Primary Contact and one address as the Primary Mailing Address. The College will provide other guardians with information relating to the students education as outlined by the guidelines below.

The provision of personal student information by the College will be subject to any legal considerations including the wishes of the specific student, family arrangements and the College's Privacy Policy and the Commonwealth Privacy Act.

Guidelines

- Information regarding family arrangements will be drawn from the Enrolment Form. This information can be updated in writing at any time during the year and can be updated via the Community Portal.
- All guardians will be provided with the following information:
 - **Parent Access Module (PAM) Access:** The Parent Access Module provides a login for each guardian to resources such as attendance, assessment, learning resources, letters of concern (a SMS is also sent to alert guardians to the uploading of a letter) and daily notices for each student. The login is secured by a password and limited to the students linked to the account.
 - **The Lighthouse:** This newsletter is published fortnightly and is emailed to all contacts (custodial and non-custodial) and is also accessible on the Parent Access Module (PAM)
 - **Illuminare:** This magazine is published three times a year and is emailed to all families who have requested mail and is also accessible on PAM.
- The College will provide Student Reports via the Parent Access Module (PAM). These will be available to all guardians who have access to PAM.
 - Semester 1 Summative Report – End of Term 2
 - Semester 2 Summative Report – End of Term 4
 - Homework and Assessment as completed throughout each Semester

- Information that will only be sent to the designated primary contact includes:
 - **General Contact**

Communications such as permission forms for activities that only require one signature. These are uploaded onto PAM and permission can be granted by guardians with access to PAM. Examples of such communications are: overnight excursion permission forms, notices referring to schoolwork or behaviour and VCE, VCAL, VET and tertiary placement information.
 - **Student / Parent / Teacher Interview Appointments**

The Primary Contact is responsible for making bookings for Parent Teacher Interviews on behalf of the other guardian as only one interview per student per teacher is permitted. It is the responsibility of the Primary Contact to pass on the information about Student / Parent / Teacher Interviews to other guardians.
 - **Illness**

The designated Primary Contact will be the person contacted if a student requires medical treatment or needs to be sent home from school due to illness. The Primary Contact will also be designated to receive an SMS message from the College in the case of unexplained absence.
 - **Letter of Offer**

Upon applying for a place at Aquinas College, successful applicants will receive a letter of offer. Only one letter of offer will be sent by mail to the residential address of the student. It is the responsibility of the Primary Contact to inform other guardians.
- Shared guardianship

In cases where guardianship of a student is shared by Court Order, the College will consider each guardian to have access to information in accordance with the order. A copy of the court order will need to be provided to the College at the time of enrolment / re-enrolment.

Private Income Policy



Introduction

Schools are in receipt of Australian and Victorian government recurrent and capital funding. In addition to government funding, each MACS school is responsible for setting and managing its own fees and levies, remissions and concessions, collectively known as private income.

Purpose

To establish how MACS primary and secondary, special and special assistance schools will set and manage tuition fees, levies, ad hoc charges and donations for local and full fee paying overseas students.

Scope

This Policy applies to:

- MACS primary, secondary, special and special assistance schools
- MACS primary, secondary, special and special assistance school Principals, staff and external advisors involved setting and managing private income
- MACS Executive Director, Chief Financial Officer and staff involved with private income on behalf of MACS schools
- MACS primary, secondary, special and special assistance School Advisory Councils

Definitions

Acronym term	Full name and explanatory text
ATO	Australian Taxation Office
Business Manager	MACS secondary, special and special assistance school Business Managers
CECV	Catholic Education Commission of Victoria Limited
Delegate	A role or group (such as a Committee) with delegated authority under the MACS Financial Delegation Instruments
Delegation Instrument(s)	MACS Financial Delegation Instruments for primary, secondary, special and special assistance schools, as delegated by the MACS Board.
FFPOS	Full fee paying overseas students who are not funded by Australian or State recurrent grant funding
HCC	Health Care Card, an allowance provided by the State government to assist low-income families to meet the educational needs of their children. The proportion of HCC recipient students enrolled at a school is a measure of the school's 'need' or disadvantage.
MACS	Melbourne Archdiocese Catholic Schools Ltd. company.
MACS Board	Melbourne Archdiocese Catholic Schools Ltd. Board of Directors
Principal	MACS primary, secondary, special and special assistance school Principals

Principles

Each MACS school is responsible for setting and managing its own fees, levies, concessions and remissions and for its own fee and levy collection and debtor management.

In recognition of the different capacity of families to contribute to the costs of education, government uses a Schooling Resource Standard funding model combined with a Capacity to Contribute model which is intended to account for the financial position of families. These are designed to fund the system according to need.

The CECV policy formula for allocating funding to Catholic schools also accounts for need. In addition, schools are provided with additional financial assistance for each HCC student, which enables them to offer fee remissions.

Policy

1. Delegation to Set and Vary Fees

- 1.1 The MACS Board has delegated the power to set and vary fees and levies within set parameters.
- 1.2 Delegated specific powers to set and vary school fees and levies are detailed in the MACS primary and secondary, special and special assistance school Financial Delegation Instruments.

2. Setting School Fees and Levies

- 2.1 MACS recognises the significant contribution that individual schools make to the cost of education through the generation of private income.
- 2.2 Schools are obliged to set and vary fees according to criteria that represent a thorough and transparent assessment of the internal and external factors influencing costs and available recurrent grant funding.
- 2.3 FFPOS are not funded by Australian or State recurrent grant funding.
- 2.4 Fees for FFPOS should not be subsidised by recurrent grant or private income received for/from local students and should be set in accordance with Procedures point 1 of this Policy.
- 2.5 Schools should ensure that information regarding the school's fees and levies is accessible in a variety of ways, including the school website.
- 2.6 The school's communication/strategy plan should make provision for the development and review of strategies for the dissemination of information about its fees and levies.

3. Ad Hoc Charges

- 3.1 From time to time, schools may run activities or require the purchase of items that enhance or broaden the student's schooling experience.
- 3.2 These activities or items are offered as additions to the standard curriculum.
- 3.3 Students may access these activities or items on a user pays basis, with a resultant ad hoc charge.
- 3.4 Ad hoc charges may include non-curriculum based school events, optional excursions and camps, optional sporting or music programs and materials that do not relate to the standard curriculum.

4. Fee Remissions and Concessions

- 4.1 MACS schools are expected to provide fee remissions/concessions to families in need, including students who hold an HCC.
- 4.2 The MACS Board has delegated the power to provide fee remissions and/or concessions.
- 4.3 Delegated specific powers to provide fee remissions and/or concessions are detailed in the MACS primary and secondary, special and special assistance school Financial Delegation Instruments.
- 4.4 Primary schools should refer to the MACS Primary School Concessional Fee Policy and the MACS Primary School Financial and Administrative Procedures Manual, Chapter 8 for further information.

5. Invoicing Fees and Levies

- 5.1 Each school is responsible for setting its own invoicing cycle and invoicing throughout the school year.
- 5.2 Schools are to make every effort to help families understand their obligation to pay fees and levies.

6. Donations

- 6.1 Schools may receive donations in a variety of ways including donations to specific purpose Funds, such as the School Building Fund, Library Fund and Scholarship Fund, or directly to the School.
- 6.2 When the Fund is registered as a Deductible Gift Recipient with the ATO, donations made of \$2.00 or more to the School Building Fund, Library Fund and Scholarship Fund are tax deductible.
- 6.3 Donations to the school are not tax deductible.

Procedures

Private income procedures are detailed at Appendix 1 of this Policy.

Related Policies

MACS Financial Reporting and Controls Policy
MACS Primary School Concessional Fee Policy

References

N/A

Responsible director	MACS Executive Director
Policy owner	MACS Director, Finance and Infrastructure Services
Approving body/individual	MACS Board of Directors
Approval date	12 May 2021
Date of next review	September 2023 (for an effective date of 1 January 2024)

POLICY DATABASE INFORMATION	
Related documents	Appendix 1 Private Income Procedures MACS Primary School Financial and Administrative Procedures Manual– Chapter 8 MACS Primary School Financial Delegation Instrument MACS Secondary, Special and Special Assistance School Financial Delegation Instrument
Superseded documents	CEM Policy 2.27 School Fees
New policy	N/A

Appendix 1

Private Income Procedures

1. Setting and Varying Schools Fees and Levies

- 1.1 School fees and levies should be reviewed and set annually in line with the school's budget cycle, in sufficient time to advise school families of the following year's fees and levies
- 1.2 When setting school fees and levies, schools should consider recurrent fees and levies to assist in meeting the operating expenses of the school, capital fees to assist in the purchase of assets and/or repayment of loans for capital purposes and fee discounts for families with more than one child enrolled at the school.
- 1.3 Where the school accepts enrolment of FFPOS, separate fees and levies should be set for FFPOS at a minimum of local student fees, plus Australian and State government funding amounts and other overhead costs relating to FFPOS, as a minimum base fee. Primary Schools should refer to the MACS Primary School Financial and Administrative Procedures Manual, Chapter 8 for further information.
- 1.4 Approval of setting or varying primary school fees and levies that are:
 - 1.4.1 within a $\geq+2\%$ to $\leq+5\%$ increase on the prior year can be approved by the Principal
 - 1.4.2 within $<+2\%$ or $>+5\%$ increase on the on the prior year must be approved by the Principal and the MACS Chief Financial Officer.
- 1.5 Approval of setting or varying secondary school fees and levies that are:
 - 1.5.1 within a $\geq+2\%$ to $\leq+5\%$ increase on the prior year need to be approved by both the Principal and the Business Manager
 - 1.5.2 within $<+2\%$ or $>+5\%$ increase on the on the prior year must be endorsed by the Business Manager and the Principal and approved MACS Chief Financial Officer.
- 1.6 Approval of setting or varying fees and levies by the appropriate delegates should be retained in writing.
- 1.7 Once set for the school year, school fees and levies may be varied on as 'as required' basis.
- 1.8 Varying school fees and levies should occur only in exceptional circumstances.
- 1.9 The School Advisory Council should be informed when fees and/or levies are set or varied.

2. Billing Fees, Levies and Fee Concessions/Remissions

- 2.1 The Principal is the approved delegate for approval of fee concessions or remissions. Approval must be documented in writing.
- 2.2 Fee and levy billing and application of fee concessions/remissions should be processed wholly within the school's accounting system, in accordance with the school's billing cycle.
- 2.3 Where authorised by the Principal, fee concessions/remissions may also be applied subsequent to billing.
- 2.4 Fees and levies should be billed in full for all students, with any fee concessions or remissions applied to the full fee or levy charged.

- 2.5 Primary schools should follow the procedures detailed in the MACS Concessional School Fee policy to determine appropriate fee concessions or remissions.
- 2.6 Secondary school fee concessions and remissions are made at the discretion of the Principal.
- 2.7 Fees, levies, concessions and remissions should be reconciled at each billing cycle to ensure completeness of billing.
- 2.8 Discrepancies in completeness of billing and/or resultant expected income should be promptly investigated and addressed.
- 2.9 Schools should reconcile their debtor's ledger to the general ledger debtor's account on a monthly basis and promptly investigate and address any discrepancies, in accordance with the MACS Financial Reporting and Controls Policy.
- 2.10 MACS primary school debtor reconciliations can be completed and approved by MACS Shared Services Centre, where utilised, in accordance with the Financial Delegation Instruments.
- 2.11 Evidence of reviewed and approved monthly debtor, fee and levy reconciliations should be maintained for perusal by external auditors and other authorised organisations.

3. Ad Hoc Charges

- 3.1 If the school deems a camp, excursion, activity or other item is optional and it is not part of the standard curriculum program, families will need to pay the camp, excursion, activity or other item cost if their child is to participate.
- 3.2 Schools may charge families for all costs of an optional camp, excursion or activity including the cost of transport, food, entry fees and accommodation for their child and any teacher(s) attending the optional camp, excursion or activity.
- 3.3 Schools may also charge for the cost of a Casual Relief Teacher who is engaged for the purpose of supporting the optional camp, excursion or activity, however, schools cannot charge families for the salaries of school teaching staff attending the optional camp, excursion or activity.
- 3.4 Where the charge is for an item, schools may charge families for the purchase price of the item including the cost of any delivery or associated fees.
- 3.5 Ad hoc charges may be charged through the issue of a separate invoice for payment before the event takes place or the item is provided, or added to the family's account for payment with the next tuition fee instalment, at the Principal's and/or Business Manager's discretion.
- 3.6 Where schools elect to add ad hoc charges "on account" for payment with the next tuition fee instalment, the risk of non-payment after the optional ad hoc camp, excursion, activity or other item has taken place/been provided needs to be assessed and considered as part of the invoicing decision making process.



COLLEGE MAP



BUILDINGS

- | | |
|------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| A Administration/Reception | J VCAL |
| B Music | K IT & St Mary's |
| D Middle Years | L Year 9 |
| E ESS | M Aquinas Resource Centre |
| F Mary MacKillop Chapel | N Dominic Arts Centre & YFC |
| G Staff Centre & Technology | O Music Department |
| H Gymnasium & Mahon Theatre | P VCAL Classrooms |
| I Senior Years | V VET Building & Construction |



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