Melbourne Archdiocese
Catholic Schools

Clairvaux Primary School
School Advisory Council Terms of Reference

Introduction

Clairvaux Primary School 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).

Vision

Clairvaux, an authentic learning community, shaping and enriching our world. We strive to achieve our vision by:
Inspiring culturally and globally informed life long learners who live in the spirit of faith and love.
Developing an inclusive and engaged learning community that meets the diverse needs of all learners.
Interacting with empathy and respect to build a culture of compassion and understanding.
Building strong relationships where every member is seen, heard and valued.
Fostering creative and critical thinking.
We endeavour to live out our vision at Clairvaux through our nine Touchstones:
- Belonging
- Friendship
- Happiness
- Positivity
- Connection
- Kindness
- Growth
- Respect
- Purpose

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 Clairvaux Primary School. Clear lines of authority, reporting and delegation from the MACS board through the Executive Director delegate the day-to-day operational management of Clairvaux Catholic School 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 parent[1] 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.

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 Clairvaux Catholic School 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 (ex officio) (custodian of mission)

(c) two parents of children attending the school

(d) one parishioner. A parishioner 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

[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.

(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

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 Clairvaux Catholic School 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 Clairvaux Catholic School 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 Clairvaux Catholic School School Advisory Council in accordance with the requirements under Section Error: Reference source not found: 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 Clairvaux Catholic School School Advisory Council is will be through an expression of interest in our School newsletter. This allows for interested persons to consider their position and clarify any questions they may have. Anyone interested in becoming a member of the Clairvaux Catholic School 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 three years ending on the conclusion of the third 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 Clairvaux Catholic School School Advisory Council includes:

- follow-up briefings after the first council meeting and any further support and guidance.

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 Clairvaux Catholic School 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 Clairvaux Catholic School School Advisory Council meets six times throughout the year.

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.

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
Policy owner	Director, Catholic Mission and Identity
Approving authority	Executive Director
Assigned board committee	Catholic Mission and Identity
Approval date	3 April 2024
Risk Rating	High
Review by	2026
Publication	MACS website, CEVN, school website

POLICY DATABASE INFORMATION	
Assigned framework	Governance
Supporting documents	See list of supporting documents and related policies above
Superseded documents	School Advisory Councils – Terms of Reference – Single parish – v1.0 – 2021 School Advisory Councils – Terms of Reference – Multiple parishes – v1.0 – 2021 School Advisory Councils – Terms of Reference – Secondary schools – v1.0 - 2021
New policy	New