



MELBOURNE  
ARCHDIOCESE  
**CATHOLIC SCHOOLS**

Horizons  
of Hope

FOUNDATION STATEMENT:

# School Effectiveness

in a Catholic school



## Stanley 1

The concept of my artwork is to depict a 'macro' view of nature. I wanted to convey a sense of beauty and the significance for our natural environment through the depiction of vast, boundless landscapes incorporating different aspects of nature including hill-, sea- and skiescapes. (Maeva, Year 12)

# What is school effectiveness in a Catholic school?

The school as a whole is an important unit of change for student outcomes. Together with high-quality teachers and leaders, the different ways in which a school functions contribute directly to the education outcomes of students. School effectiveness looks to understand these functions and how they impact on students' growth and progress.

The school as an organisation is critical. Research shows that teachers and leaders have the greatest impact on students' engagement and achievement. It is important however to

recognise that strategies designed and implemented to improve learning, teaching or leading rarely occur in isolation. Each unique effect on student outcomes can be a challenge to separate from other activities occurring at the school and system levels. Effective schools thus provide the conditions for quality leading and learning to occur despite the complexity of doing so.

School effectiveness considers the characteristics of effective schools and identifies the differences between educational outcomes within those schools.

By considering a school's specific objectives, evidence-based and data-informed assessments can be made as to how well these objectives are reached and why. It is therefore imperative that the processes and initiatives that schools implement have clear intentions for their impact on outcomes, data collection that guides decision-making and subsequent methods of evaluating their effectiveness. In doing so, the alignment between a school's improvement plans, annual action plans and daily practices sets up a structure to support effectiveness and achievement. In a Catholic

school, these continuous learning processes and systematic school improvement practices support schools to grow effectively and, in turn, support each learner to flourish.

*Educating requires working with hope and confidence. Education and teaching must be concerned with constant self-improvement and verifying the effectiveness of its tools, being aware that not all expected results can always be seen or ascertained (Educating today and tomorrow: A renewing passion, Congregation for Catholic Education, 2014).*

School effectiveness considers the characteristics of effective schools and identifies the differences between educational outcomes within those schools.



### Characteristics of effective schools

Engagement in school effectiveness and school improvement research indicates the following characteristics are most common in schools that demonstrate continuous improvement:

- school leaders who develop, oversee and evaluate an annual implementation plan to improve student outcomes
- learning that focuses on student growth over time using data to analyse and evaluate outcomes
- a positive school culture featuring a shared vision, a safe and orderly climate and whole-school approaches to wellbeing and learning diversity
- a climate of high expectations for students and staff
- frequent monitoring of school, classroom and student progress
- partnerships which exist between school and home, between parent, teacher and student
- effective and documented curriculum, assessment and pedagogical practices which adapt to student needs

#### Dragonflies

A mixed media artwork using watercolour, pencil, charcoal, marker, ink and textured paper. (Brooke, Year 9)

- professional learning that is specific to the needs of the staff and is integrated with school improvement goals and strategies
- students who have and know their rights and responsibilities and demonstrate them through student voice, leadership and agency (Masters 2016; Purdy 2019; Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation 2020).

#### School effectiveness:

The manner in which a school uses school effectiveness research to enhance its core objectives. Changeable school variables impact on a student's outcomes and can explain the differences between like-schools.

#### School improvement:

A continuous, collaborative process through which a school community identifies the strengths and weaknesses of the organisation and uses the information as a basis for making deliberate, positive, cohesive and observable changes in measurable student outcomes.

#### School effectiveness research

tends to be a more scientific or clinical approach to what makes education effective while **school improvement research** leans more towards cultural or contextual approaches in understanding how to improve schools (Purdy 2019).

Students who have and know their rights and responsibilities and demonstrate them through student voice, leadership and agency.

# How is school effectiveness enacted in a Catholic school?



## More than the formal curriculum

Effective Catholic schools draw on a range of evidence to measure the learning growth, progress and improvement of every student and to determine where to go next (Catholic Education Melbourne 2016). School effectiveness,

however, moves beyond a sole consideration of academic outcomes. Enacting the vision for Catholic education to equip our young people with the knowledge, skills, hope and optimism to live meaningful lives and shape and enrich the world around them provides the

focus for school improvement and the relevant processes. The integration of faith, intellect and human development is an ambitious hope-filled goal, based on the experience of God's love and care for us all.

## A continuous improvement agenda

Effective Catholic schools have a continuous improvement agenda that is visible, comprehensive and explicitly planned. These approaches are data-informed, evidence-based and co-constructed actions that are collaborative and



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### Modern Mary

*I was working with the theme of making old art new through religious iconography. I was interested in the colours and shapes of stained glass windows and how it can be linked to pop art. Mary and the baby Jesus are a powerful symbol of faith and teaches us the values of love, family and compassion.*  
(Hayley, Year 10)



aligned to improving student learning outcomes (Catholic Education Melbourne 2019). Teachers demonstrate collective teacher efficacy while school leaders focus on both individual student-focused classroom practices and large-scale improvement initiatives (Catholic Education Melbourne 2019). The improvement agenda is

enlightened by faith, animated by love and led by hope. It ensures that student engagement and wellbeing occur in partnership with families, and teaching practices produce a range of data to measure the impact of teaching initiatives and learning on student outcomes (Catholic Education Melbourne 2019).



### Flourishing of the human person

At the very heart of each Catholic school is a desire for the full flourishing of each student, across religious, physical, cognitive, emotional and social domains (Catholic Education Melbourne 2016). Effective Catholic schools prioritise the development of student social competencies by embedding learning opportunities into pedagogy, curriculum, behaviour support systems, expectations and structures. Measurable improvements in

non-cognitive learning also include social/affective outcomes such as attendance and learner attitudes. Social and emotional wellbeing underpin effective student learning and positive behaviour. As such, there is a need to value more than just academic results. In order to value the narrative of each student, their context, their world and their families all contribute to the nurturing of their own religious, physical, cognitive, emotional and social domains.

### Context matters

Each Catholic school has its own particular context within its own community. Differences in the physical environments, processes and structures of every school may produce different outcomes. Teachers and leaders value the essential role of the parish and of families as partners in a child's school education. Imperative to the success of any school effectiveness initiative is consideration of the improvement priorities and innovations that

respond to a community's unique context (Hallinger & Heck 2011). It is this uniqueness that supports Catholic schools to determine their direction, in conjunction with Melbourne Archdiocese Catholics Schools' (MACS) *School Improvement Framework: Growing Effective Schools*.



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# Why is school effectiveness in a Catholic school important given the vision and context?

## Honour the sacred dignity of each person

School effectiveness in a Catholic school uncovers the proficiency of a school and its students' individual learning journeys. Varied contexts strengthen and challenge communities in different ways throughout the process of continuous school improvement. Families

in partnership with Catholic schools entrust their children to the stewardship of teachers whose moral purpose is to narrow the achievement gaps among all. With God at work in all of creation, each individual is known as a learner and their community honours the sacred dignity of each person.

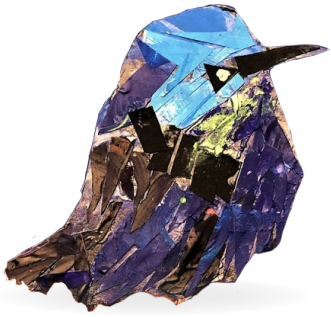
## Search for truth

School effectiveness in a Catholic school provides opportunities for staff and students to develop a greater sense of inquiry and growth in themselves and their communities. It supports engagement in asking big questions, navigating change to bring the needs of the students to the forefront and an openness to identifying practices that best serve the community. In Catholic schools there is no separation between time for learning and

time for formation. Learning is more than knowledge to be attained, but also values to be acquired and truths to be discovered (Congregation for Catholic Education 1997). Catholic schools inspire their students through a fundamental education, open to all dimensions of existence. Through school effectiveness practices, there is hope that educational leaders foster in themselves and others a love for truth.

### Bird Resting

*This is a mixed media piece. A photograph of a bird was chosen. Acrylic paint was used to make painted paper for the feathers of the bird which was then collaged onto the photograph to look like feathers. For the background acrylic, shimmer and watercolour paint was used. Details were added with fine liner pen. (Victoria, Year 4)*



### **Embrace difference and diversity**

School effectiveness in a Catholic school sees procedures in place which incorporate the use of data to encourage school-wide policies, practices and programs to identify and address the needs of every student (Sharratt 2019). Diversity encompasses all learners across religious, cultural, academic, social-emotional and physical attributes. Flexible structures and processes

enable schools to respond appropriately and in a timely manner to address the individual differences and diversities of learners. As a result, effective schools are identifiable by their engaging and inclusive learning environments where different rates of learning, tailored classroom activities and early intervention identify and respond to individual student needs.

### **Build a culture of learning together**

School effectiveness in a Catholic school sees a specific focus on the growth and development of each individual in the community, with students at the centre. The most effective way to achieve this is to develop meaningful partnerships with students, families, teachers and

leaders where collaboration, communication and trust are inherent (Fullan 2016). Collaborative inquiry is embedded in the culture and life of the school and educators care for and work in solidarity with each other (Hargreaves & O'Connor 2018). It encourages each learner to contribute to their community through exchange, reflection and collective action.



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### **Commitment to highest standards**

School effectiveness in a Catholic school sees the pre-conditions for all learners, students and teachers alike to have high expectations for success, within and beyond school. Based on data that is respectful of students' ability to grow, teachers provide opportunities for all learners

to participate, learn and strive for excellence. Additionally, a student's perception of their ability, their expectations of future success and the extent to which they value an activity influence their motivation and persistence. Through deep knowledge of the curriculum and use of high-impact pedagogical strategies, teachers demonstrate excellence in effective learning and teaching.

### **Make a difference in the world**

School effectiveness in a Catholic school sees schools grow to best meet the needs of their students in their current and future contexts. It strives to support communities to understand their own talents and potential, while offering the structure and process to see them flourish. Communities approach learning for greater justice, social equity and global solidarity while embracing the possibilities of

a contemporary world. School effectiveness can be a catalyst, providing opportunities of encounter and convergence for the entire educating community. Catholic schools encourage learners who question, think, reflect and bear witness to the common good. The aim is that students become competent and honest, know how to love with fidelity, live life as a response to God's call and act in service to society.



**The Bright Side**

*This artwork was created by using drips and straws and then woven into a piece of artwork.*

[Dewi, Jasmine, Helena and Sasha, Year 5]

# Resources

## What resources are available to support school effectiveness in a Catholic school?

### Internal resources

- *Horizons of Hope: Vision & Context* (Catholic Education Melbourne 2016): <https://www.macsvic.edu.au/CatholicEducationMelbourne/media/Documentation/HoH%20Documents/HoH-vision-context.pdf>
- 'School Improvement' area on the CEVN website: <https://cevn.cecv.catholic.edu.au/Melb/School-Improvement>
  - School Improvement Framework: Growing Effective Schools
  - Spheres and Capabilities resources
  - Continuous Improvement Process resources.
- School Effectiveness team at Melbourne Archdiocese Catholic Schools Ltd (MACS), contactable via [sif@macsvic.edu.au](mailto:sif@macsvic.edu.au) or (03) 9267 0228

### External resources

- *School improvement frameworks: The evidence base* (Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation 2014): [https://www.cese.nsw.gov.au/images/stories/PDF/School\\_improvement\\_frameworks-The\\_evidence\\_base.pdf](https://www.cese.nsw.gov.au/images/stories/PDF/School_improvement_frameworks-The_evidence_base.pdf)
- *School leadership and student outcomes: Identifying what works and why: Best evidence synthesis iteration* (New Zealand Ministry of Education 2009): <https://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/publications/series/2515/60170>
- 'School reviews and reporting' area on the Victorian Registration & Qualifications Authority website: <https://www.vrqa.vic.gov.au/schools/Pages/school-reviews-and-reporting.aspx>

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*Stanley 1*  
**Maeve, Year 12**, Sacré Cœur,  
Glen Iris



*The Trail of the Illusion*  
**Sienna, Year 5**, Corpus  
Christi, Werribee



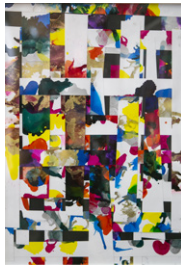
*Bird Resting*  
**Victoria, Year 4**, St Leonard's  
School, Glen Waverley



*Dragonflies*  
**Brooke, Year 9**, Our Lady of  
the Sacred Heart College,  
Bentleigh



*Modern Mary*  
**Hayley, Year 10**, Mater  
Christi College, Belgrave



*The Bright Side*  
**Dewi, Jasmine, Helena and  
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School, Brighton East

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