

School Advisory Councils

Establishing a School Advisory Council



MELBOURNE
ARCHDIOCESE
CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

School Advisory Councils in MACS schools

Arising from consultation during the establishment of Melbourne Archdiocese Catholic Schools (MACS), it was affirmed that the School Advisory Council is a living expression of the principle of subsidiarity in action and plays a critical role in the system governance of MACS schools.

The establishment and presence of School Advisory Councils reflect the consultative nature of Catholic education, are informed by the theology and vision articulated in the MACS *Statement of Mission* and the *Working Together in Mission* charter, and provide assurance of good system governance across all MACS schools.

To this end, the MACS board has determined that each primary and secondary MACS school in the Archdiocese will establish a School Advisory Council whose actions will be defined by a Terms of Reference for School Advisory Councils as defined by the MACS board and adapted to each school's local context.

Terms of Reference

In establishing a School Advisory Council, it is important for the parish priest as custodian of mission to collaborate with the school principal in order to familiarise themselves with the MACS Terms of Reference for School Advisory Councils appropriate to their context, so that proper procedures are followed. These conversations at a local level can also be informed by reference to the MACS *Statement of Mission* and the *Working Together in Mission* charter.

Local discernment will be required concerning how to transition the current arrangement to conform within the structure and operation of the School Advisory Council with regard to the MACS Terms of Reference for School Advisory Councils. Issues to consider may revolve around the number of parents, staff, students (especially for secondary schools) and other co-opted experts who may be required to be permanent members or invited to attend from time to time. It must be remembered that the parish priest and the principal are ex-officio members.

Suggested process

- A carefully worded advertisement for the school and parish newsletter should be developed, asking for expressions of interest to be a member of the School Advisory Council. The advertisement only needs to be simple and should briefly indicate the purpose of the council, its advisory nature, that expressions of interest are open to all parents and that no particular expertise is necessarily required.
- Once expressions of interest are gathered, the parish priest and the principal will review the applicants and make a selection using a process appropriate to the local context.
- It is essential for the selected parents to be inclusive of all community members, and demonstrate a genuine commitment to gender equity and diversity regardless of socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds.
- For all schools, it is required that one parishioner be appointed. 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.



- Appointments are made according to the determined number and template appointment letters are provided.
- The principal and parish priest will discern what expertise is required to support the School Advisory Council (e.g. financial, legal, etc.), who might be invited and under what conditions they will be members of the council.
- It should be clear that induction and appropriate ongoing professional and spiritual formation will be part of the requirements for members, including the parish priest and the principal.
- Induction will include familiarity with the *School Advisory Council Manual*, MACS Terms of Reference for School Advisory Councils, *MACS Statement of Mission*, *Working Together in Mission*, child safety protocols, various MACS policies and expectations of council members.
- Members are required to have a Working with Children Check, accept the MACS Code of Conduct for School Advisory Council members and sign the school's Child Safety Code of Conduct.
- The School Advisory Council will receive greater standing within the school and parish community if there is a blessing and commissioning ceremony for the new council and council members.

Next steps

1. **Read and become familiar** with the following, which are all available on the MACS website:
 - [MACS Statement of Mission](#)
 - [Working Together in Mission charter](#)
 - [MACS Terms of Reference for School Advisory Councils](#).
2. **View** the following MACS webpages:
 - [Who we are](#)
 - [Why MACS?](#)
3. **Review and modify** the MACS Terms of Reference for School Advisory Councils template for your context.
4. **Formally move to close** any parish education advisory board (PEAB) or school board and establish a School Advisory Council adopting your modified Terms of Reference for the school.
5. **Communicate with your community** by promoting the links above, referring people to the [FAQs](#) and working through the following steps with the suggested resources:
 - Send a [letter](#) to the school and parish community informing them of the establishment of a School Advisory council.
 - Advertise in the school and parish newsletter for written [expressions of interest](#) to the principal.
 - Conduct a [discernment process](#) between the principal and parish priest to see which members are the best fit for the school's local context.
 - Inform successful members with a [letter of appointment](#), ensuring they have access to the [MACS Code of Conduct for School Advisory Council members](#) and the school's Child Safety Code of Conduct, and have a Working with Children Check.
 - Organise appropriate induction and formation for members.



In addition, add the following to the school's website:

Further information about School Advisory Councils can be found at the following MACS links:

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

Refer to the [10 Stages](#) document that lists the stages to begin operation of School Advisory Councils. It can be used as a guide to mark your journey and as a feedback mechanism to the School Advisory Councils Secretariat.

