



CATHOLIC SCHOOL FAMILIES TO RECEIVE SUPPORT AS PART OF TRANSITION PLAN

Families and carers of students attending four Catholic primary schools will receive financial and wellbeing support to assist them with transitioning to neighbouring schools from 2024.

Melbourne Archdiocese Catholic Schools (MACS) Executive Director Dr Edward Simons said all alternative options were explored before making the difficult decision that it is no longer sustainable to operate these schools beyond this year.

The schools are:

- St Bridget's Catholic Primary School, Greythorn
- St John's Primary School, Clifton Hill
- St Joseph's Primary School, Black Rock
- St Mary Magdalen's Parish School, Chadstone

Dr Simons acknowledged this is upsetting news for our valued school communities and MACS remained committed to ensuring a smooth transition for all impacted students, staff and their families.

"Over the past few months, we held several meetings with principals, parish priests and parent representatives as part of the consultation process to understand how we could best support these schools," Dr Simons said.

"We looked closely at enrolment outlook and demographic trends, proximity of neighbouring schools, projected financial outlook, educational programs, site facilities and pastoral mission as well as the ability to continue to attract and maintain students and teachers in each of these communities, unique to their circumstances.

"After weighing up a range of factors, and careful consideration of significant community feedback, we have come to the difficult decision that it is not viable to continue operating these schools into the future."

MACS will support students, families and carers with individualised and tailored plans, to support their transition into a new school community. This extends to teachers and support staff with a number of pathways available.

"We will ensure everyone receives the support they need, including appropriate fee relief, uniform support and funding for students, as well as redeployment options for staff," Dr Simons said.

Over the past decade, government and non-government schools alike have grappled with the necessity of making difficult choices to ensure the long-term viability of educational institutions.

Dr Simons said Catholic schools including MACS have not been exempt from these complex evaluations.

"With almost 300 schools and 110,000 students, we have a responsibility to use all our resources as effectively as possible to build a thriving and sustainable education system that meets the evolving needs of students and parish communities across the Archdiocese," Dr Simons said.

"Our modelling shows that demand for Catholic education is growing in Melbourne's northern and western corridors, where we have opened twelve schools since 2018, servicing a combined number of 4,766 students.

“At the same time, we continue to support schools with small student cohorts to flourish and have plans to open seven new schools over the next three years in identified growth corridors.

“MACS remains committed to its mission of nurturing the minds of tomorrow’s leaders and preparing them for success through the delivery of high-quality and faith-based learning. This includes supporting these four school communities as we navigate this transition together.

“It is also important at this time to deeply acknowledge the contribution of all those who have led, worked in, and supported these schools over a long period of time.”

ENDS

Background:

- The four primary schools affected by this decision have a combined enrolment of approximately 300 students.
- The schools will remain open until the last day of Term 4, 2023.
- Support will be on site from Friday 18 August and ongoing for all to access, as required, with information sessions for families and carers scheduled next week.
- In 2023, overall enrolments in 266 Catholic primary schools across the Archdiocese increased by around 400 to 78,335 or about 1 in 5 students.

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