School Advisory Council Manual

For all MACS schools

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MELBOURNE
ARCHDIOCESE
CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

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 292 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.

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Introduction

Through service on a School Advisory Council, members of the parish[1] 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.

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) has been 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.

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

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 about 20,000 teaching and non-teaching staff in 335 Catholic schools serving more than 153,000 students (March 2020 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 generally effective 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 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.

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

* 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 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).

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
- 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 Catholic Education Commission of Victoria Ltd (CECV) policies and guidelines
- contributing to the panel that guides the process of principal appraisal as per MACS and CECV policies and guidelines
- receiving reports from the principal to be informed as per requirements in various MACS and CECV 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.

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 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
  - 5 Year VRQA Finance Business Plan and Cashflow
- Purchasing
  - Preferred suppliers list, per the MACS Primary FAPM process <$100,000
  - Tenders for Operational Projects ≥$100,000 per tender
  - Tenders for Building Projects ≥$100,000 per tender
  - Tenders for IT Projects ≥$100,000 per tender
  - Purchase orders ≥$100,000 per purchase order – Operational Projects
  - Purchase orders ≥$100,000 per purchase order – Capital Building Projects
  - Purchase orders ≥$100,000 per purchase order – Capital IT Projects
- Fee Management
  - Setting or variation of fees, compulsory tuition charges, excursions, levies within ≥ 2% to ≤ 5% increase on prior year
  - Setting or variation of fees, compulsory tuition charges, excursions, levies < 2% or > 5% increase on prior year
  - Write-offs, discounts, rebates (exemptions of recurrent and capital fees, compulsory tuition charges, excursions, levies)
- Asset Management
  - 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.

[3] *Financial and Administrative Procedures Manual – MACS Primary Schools*, Appendix to Chapter 1: Authority Matrix.

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

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

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.

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

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.

Council structures

Guide to MACS Terms of Reference for School Advisory Councils

Each school has the flexibility to adapt a MACS Terms of Reference for School Advisory Councils template to suit its own particular needs. Three templates have been developed 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 chosen 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 appropriate MACS Terms of Reference for School Advisory Councils 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 Terms of Reference for School Advisory Councils template appropriate to your school. It is designed to provide a MACS school with the structure for its School Advisory Council.

Membership

The principle of solidarity means that, across all 292 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.

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
- Families as Partners
- Family and Community Engagement.

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

- Who we are
- Why MACS?

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

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.

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 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.

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

Offered by MACS personnel	Offered by the school

• Group induction:
  ○ principals and parish priests
  ○ chairs – twice yearly
  ○ 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
	• 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

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	• Provide an information pack with access to:
	  ○ MACS *Statement of Mission*
	  ○ school vision and mission
	  ○ *Working Together in Mission*
	  ○ 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	• Outline expectations • Provide access to all documents listed in the letter
Meeting with the chair	• 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	• 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	• Gain awareness of the connection between parish and school • Introduce other members and discuss their roles on the School Advisory Council

Activity	Purpose
	• Discuss current members' experiences and impressions of the position and its responsibilities • Attend question and answer session
Introductory School Advisory Council course	• 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)	• 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	• 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	• 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

• Exploration of:
  ○ MACS *Statement of Mission*
  ○ *Working Together in Mission*
• 'How to navigate' workshops on:
  ○ Terms of Reference
  ○ *School Advisory Council Manual*
• Renewal of School Advisory Council workshops
• Annual visits to individual schools
• Annual Archdiocesan School Advisory Council Mass
• Visits to School Advisory Council meetings
	• 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 vary between primary and secondary. For primary schools, they are outlined in sections 2.7 and 2.8, and Schedule B of Chapter 2 in the *Financial and Administrative Procedures Manual – MACS Primary Schools*, which all primary schools have access to. For MACS secondary schools, they will be outlined in a policy for parents and friends that has been shared with the secondary principal reference group and is awaiting formal approval by the MACS board.

2a – Financial and compliance obligations for school controlled PFAs

'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. The General Guidelines in Schedule B outline the structure of a parents and friends association and are to be used in conjunction with sections 2.7 and 2.8 of the *Financial and Administrative Procedures Manual – MACS Primary Schools*.

The CECV *Financial Compliance Obligations Guide* 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 CECV 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.

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.

[7] *Financial and Administrative Procedures Manual – MACS Primary Schools*, section 2.7.1.

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 Terms of Reference for School Advisory Councils, as defined by the MACS board and adapted to each school's local context. Three templates are provided for 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.

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 first four policies listed are individually contextualised for each MACS school and can be found on each school's website. In each school, the policy in place (and available on the website) will have been derived from MACS templates provided for school use in order to ensure MACS' compliance with the VRQA minimum standards. MACS schools transferred all policies to the MACS templates on 12 July 2021. The last two policies below are standard across the whole system.

Child Safety Policy

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.

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

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.

Enrolment Policy

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.

MACS 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 for Employees, Contractors and Consultants

The purpose of this policy is to inform MACS employees, contractors and consultants 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 MACS Financial Framework.

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 – twice yearly
- 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

- Child Safety Code of Conduct (available from the school)
- Child Safety Policy (available from the school)
- Complaints Handling Policy (available from the school)
- Enrolment Policy (available from the school)
- MACS Conflict of Interest Policy for Employees, Contractors and Consultants
- MACS Responsible Persons Policy
- MACS School Insurance 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

Click on an image to download the appropriate template for your school's context. Templates are to be shaped and contextualised for each school, and placed on the school website.

Copies of the templates are available in the appendices for your 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

- *Financial and Administrative Procedures Manual – MACS Primary Schools* (on the CEVN website)
- 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
- *School Advisory Council Manual*

Shortened forms

CECV: Catholic Education Commission of Victoria Ltd.

MACS: Melbourne Archdiocese Catholic Schools Ltd.

ToR: Terms of Reference, specifically the MACS Terms of Reference for School Advisory Councils, to be adapted for each MACS school's local context. Templates contain guidance notes for principals.

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.

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

***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.

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 292 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: The corporate entity that is responsible for the governance and operation of the schools.

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'.[8] 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 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.

[8] Catholic Australia, 'What is our mission?', Catholic Australia, Canberra, 2005.

Appendix 1 – Schools in a single parish

SINGLE PARISH

[School Name]
School Advisory Council Terms of Reference

MELBOURNE ARCHDIOCESE CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

Drafting note – guidance for use and tailoring for a MACS school in a single parish

This **MACS Terms of Reference for School Advisory Councils** *template is designed to assist a Melbourne Archdiocese Catholic Schools (MACS) school in establishing its School Advisory Council by creating a* Terms of Reference for [school name] School Advisory Council.docx*.*

The board of MACS recognises the need for each School Advisory Council to be appropriate in the context of each school. This template is for use by a MACS school in a single parish.

This Terms of Reference is to be shaped and contextualised for your school, and placed on the school website. It remains a MACS document on company letterhead and only green highlighted text can be amended by a school without the approval of the MACS Executive Director. Yellow highlighted text provides guidance notes for principals that are to be removed upon completion.

The 11 sections cannot be renumbered or removed, but you may add local contextualised points to the current sections, as indicated with green highlights, provided they are not inconsistent with the rest of the document. No additional numbered sections can be added so that, in accordance with the principle of solidarity, across MACS schools the Terms of Reference have a shared and familiar structure.

It is the primary task of principals in consultation with the parish priest to determine and co-design what model of School Advisory Council they wish to establish in alignment with the **MACS Terms of Reference for School Advisory Councils** *template.*

In a one-school, one-parish situation, there may be a single School Advisory Council; however, where multiple schools are located within a single or multiple parish community, an overarching advisory council covering all of the schools may be necessary to address matters such as catholicity, mission and religious instruction. At the same time, each school will have its own School Advisory Council to address local matters such as representation on the principal appointment panel, school improvement, master plans and knowledge about the annual budget.

Each school has the flexibility to adapt the attached **MACS Terms of Reference for School Advisory Councils** *template to suit its own particular needs in the manner outlined above and in the yellow highlighted guidance notes throughout the Terms of Reference. Further explanation can be found in the* School Advisory Council Manual *under 'Council structures'.*

It is important to recognise that the nature and role of the School Advisory Council cannot be changed, as School Advisory Councils form part of the broader governance framework of MACS.

The drafting note page, all guidance notes and all highlighting – green and yellow – are to be removed once the Terms of Reference is completed for your school. Please save the file as **Terms of Reference for [school name] School Advisory Council.docx***, replacing [school name] with your school's name, and publish a finalised copy of the Terms of Reference on your school's website.*

SINGLE PARISH

[School name] is a school that operates with the consent of the Catholic Archbishop of Melbourne and is operated and governed by Melbourne Archdiocese Catholic Schools Ltd (MACS), where formation and education are based on the mission of Jesus and where the teachers are faithful in their witness to and service of that mission. Our school's particular vision and mission can be found on our website in the School Philosophy Statement.

CATHOLIC ARCHDIOCESE OF MELBOURNE

Replace with [school name] and logo

[Guidance Note 1 to principals: This Terms of Reference is to be contextualised for your school by inserting the name and logo of the school in the green highlighted placeholders. There are 15 instances, including in the header of the first page, the caption under the logo and the file name, where the placeholder for the name of the school must be replaced with your school's name. Your school logo must also replace the Archdiocese placeholder.

In addition, the school can insert a brief vision and mission here, and statements that give some clarity to the context of the logo and charism. Please limit this to between 50 and 200 words. More detailed explanations of your vision and mission can be obtained as indicated by reference to the School Philosophy Statement (MACS template) via link. Please remove this note and all highlighting in the final published version of this Terms of Reference.]

1. Purpose of the School Advisory Council

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

[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.

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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

Members of the School Advisory Council

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 [School name] 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:

[Guidance Note 2 to principals: The School Advisory Council will need to meet the needs of the diversity of schools within MACS. Four optional categories of member have been provided under the additional categories (f)–(i) below. Options should be selected only to reflect the variety of arrangements appropriate to each school's local context. Ex-officio positions cannot be created for employees of the MACS office, e.g. business manager (primary schools), learning consultant, regional leadership consultant, regional general manager, due to potential conflict of interest.

Insert additional members up to the recommended maximum of 10 members. These may, according to local need, include:]

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

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

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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*.

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.

*[Guidance Note 3 to principals: *Delete any options not selected. Alphabetical order will automatically be maintained. Remove any asterisks. Additional categories or alternative wording can be used as per the requirements of local context. Please remove this note and all highlighting in the final published version of this Terms of Reference.]*

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.

[Guidance Note 4 to principals of multiple schools within a single parish community: Please add the additional paragraph and amend the green highlighted text to provide an outline of the additional overarching structures or communication strategies that have been put in place to support the individual councils at each school in a situation where multiple schools are located within a single parish community. Please remove this note and all highlighting in the final published version of this Terms of Reference.]

Additional structures for multiple schools within a single parish community

As our school is one of multiple schools located within a single parish community, the parish priest and principals have determined that, to support the individual councils at each school with their various differences and needs, the following additional structures have been put in place:

[Please add details of any overarching advisory council covering all of the schools. 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. Please see the MACS *School Advisory Council Manual* for further information about possible models and strategies.

This discernment should also give consideration to the number of meetings required annually for the overarching advisory council and for each individual school, and the number of meetings the parish priest will be required to attend. See Section 8: School Advisory Council meetings and Guidance Note 9.

Whatever model is decided, the most important matter is that the parish priest and principals collaborate and meet frequently in the pursuit of maintaining the catholicity of the school and connectedness to parish, and providing what is best for the families, particularly the children, in enhancing their educational opportunities.]

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 [School name] School Advisory Council
- how council members can support the principal and the parish priest
- the appropriateness of their personal readiness to serve.

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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.

[Guidance Note 5 to principals: Please add any bullet points to the text below to demonstrate how the discernment process reflects the mission of MACS and the school.

This will ensure the development of a shared understanding of the role of the School Advisory Council so as to meet the needs of your school and parish community. Please remove this note and all highlighting in the final published version of this Terms of Reference.]

A discernment process ensures that those who have expressed an interest have had an opportunity to discern their readiness to serve. This process at [School name] 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 of 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. A 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.

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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 [School name] School Advisory Council in accordance with the requirements under Section 0: The role of individual council members in this Terms of Reference.

Expressions of interest

[Guidance Note 6 to principals: Please amend the green highlighted text to provide an outline of the process for appointing members to the School Advisory Council and how that process is made available to your school community. Please remove this note and all highlighting in the final published version of this Terms of Reference.]

Generally, expressions of interest to become 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 [School name] School Advisory Council is [include how your school processes are publicised to the community, for example, by means of a special letter, newsletter or website]. Anyone interested in becoming a member of the [School name] 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

[Guidance Note 7 to principals: Please amend or confirm the green highlighted text to determine the period of appointment. Only green highlighted text can be amended by a MACS school without the approval of the Executive Director. Please remove this note and all highlighting in the final published version of this Terms of Reference.]

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.

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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 MACS Conflict of Interest Policy for Employees, Contractors and Consultants.

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 MACS 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

[Guidance Note 8 to principals: Please amend the green highlighted text below to demonstrate how you support new council members in being inducted to the mission of MACS and the school, and the business and processes of the council. This may include lists of further meetings, documentation, calls of welcome, follow-up calls of touching base and introduction to the community.

This will ensure the development of a shared understanding of the role of the School Advisory Council so as to meet the needs of your school and parish community.

Only green highlighted text can be amended by a MACS school without the approval of the Executive Director. Please remove this note and all highlighting in the final published version of this Terms of Reference.]

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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 [School name] School Advisory Council includes:

- [state your school process of induction, e.g. 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 for Employees, Contractors and Consultants, 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 of MACS for review. The decision of the Executive Director will be final.

The principal of [School name] acts on delegation by the MACS 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 MACS 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. The role of 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

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- 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 maintaining confidentiality at all times.

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 for Employees, Contractors and Consultants
- 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
- undertaking council work with reasonable care and diligence
- participating in council formation activities
- keeping confidential the information received in the course of service as a council member
- not taking improper advantage of their position as a council member
- abiding by the applicable MACS school governance policies and key documents, including the MACS *Statement of Mission*, *Working Together in Mission* and MACS Conflict of Interest Policy for Employees, Contractors and Consultants, and the school's Child Safety Policy, Child Safety Code of Conduct and Complaints Handling Policy.

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

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- 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 on the basis of 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 in order 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.

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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.

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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 more effectively provide advice 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 particular 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.

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

The terms of reference of 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

Meetings

[Guidance Note 9 to principals: Please determine, at a school level, the number of meetings per year and, for those situations where there are multiple schools within one parish, please add the additional paragraph and indicate the required minimum attendance of the parish priest at this school's School Advisory Council meetings. Please remove this note and all highlighting in the final published version of this Terms of Reference.]

The [School name] School Advisory Council meets [six–eight times] during 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.

[Please add the additional text only for those situations where the parish priest has multiple schools within their parish, therefore making it unreasonable to expect, given the MACS board has determined that each school must have its own School Advisory Council, they can personally attend every School Advisory Council meeting at each school.]

To support the parish priest in maintaining a presence on our School Advisory Council, given that the parish priest has multiple schools within our parish, they would only be required to attend a minimum of [number] meeting[s] per [period – i.e. term/semester/year]. Additional information regarding this arrangement can be added here, such as suggested delegations and alternative communication strategies.

In the event that 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 present at all times 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

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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 MACS Conflict of Interest Policy for Employees, Contractors and Consultants, all council members must disclose any personal interest which relates, or may relate, to the operations of the school in order 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 for Employees, Contractors and Consultants as prescribed by MACS must at all times 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 MACS Executive Director, either generally or in any particular instance.

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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 available on the school's website at all times.

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.

SINGLE PARISH

Appendix 2 – Secondary schools

SECONDARY SCHOOLS

[School Name]
School Advisory Council Terms of Reference

MELBOURNE ARCHDIOCESE CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

Drafting note – guidance for use and tailoring for a MACS secondary school

This **MACS Terms of Reference for School Advisory Councils** *template is designed to assist a Melbourne Archdiocese Catholic Schools (MACS) school in establishing its School Advisory Council by creating a* Terms of Reference for [school name] School Advisory Council.docx*.*

The board of MACS recognises the need for each School Advisory Council to be appropriate in the context of each school. This template is for use by a MACS secondary school.

This Terms of Reference is to be shaped and contextualised for your school, and placed on the school website. It remains a MACS document on company letterhead and only green highlighted text can be amended by a school without the approval of the MACS Executive Director. Yellow highlighted text provides guidance notes for principals that are to be removed upon completion.

The 11 sections cannot be renumbered or removed, but you may add local contextualised points to the current sections, as indicated with green highlights, provided they are not inconsistent with the rest of the document. No additional numbered sections can be added so that, in accordance with the principle of solidarity, across MACS schools the Terms of Reference have a shared and familiar structure.

It is the primary task of principals in consultation with the parish priest to determine and co-design what model of School Advisory Council they wish to establish in alignment with the **MACS Terms of Reference for School Advisory Councils** *template.*

In a one-school, one-parish situation, there may be a single School Advisory Council; however, where multiple schools are located within a single or multiple parish community, an overarching advisory council covering all of the schools may be necessary to address matters such as catholicity, mission and religious instruction. At the same time, each school will have its own School Advisory Council to address local matters such as representation on the principal appointment panel, school improvement, master plans and knowledge about the annual budget.

Each school has the flexibility to adapt the attached **MACS Terms of Reference for School Advisory Councils** *template to suit its own particular needs in the manner outlined above and in the yellow highlighted guidance notes throughout the Terms of Reference. Further explanation can be found in the* School Advisory Council Manual *under 'Council structures'.*

It is important to recognise that the nature and role of the School Advisory Council cannot be changed, as School Advisory Councils form part of the broader governance framework of MACS.

The drafting note page, all guidance notes and all highlighting – green and yellow – are to be removed once the Terms of Reference is completed for your school. Please save the file as **Terms of Reference for [school name] School Advisory Council.docx***, replacing [school name] with your school's name, and publish a finalised copy of the Terms of Reference on your school's website.*

SECONDARY SCHOOLS

[School name] is a school that operates with the consent of the Catholic Archbishop of Melbourne and is operated and governed by Melbourne Archdiocese Catholic Schools Ltd (MACS), where formation and education are based on the mission of Jesus and where the teachers are faithful in their witness to and service of that mission. Our school's particular vision and mission can be found on our website in the School Philosophy Statement.

CATHOLIC ARCHDIOCESE OF MELBOURNE

Replace with [school name] and logo

[Guidance Note 1 to principals: This Terms of Reference is to be contextualised for your school by inserting the name and logo of the school in the green highlighted placeholders. There are 15 instances, including in the header of the first page, the caption under the logo and the file name, where the placeholder for the name of the school must be replaced with your school's name. Your school logo must also replace the Archdiocese placeholder.

In addition, the school can insert a brief vision and mission here, and statements that give some clarity to the context of the logo and charism. Please limit this to between 50 and 200 words. More detailed explanations of your vision and mission can be obtained as indicated by reference to the School Philosophy Statement (MACS template) via link. Please remove this note and all highlighting in the final published version of this Terms of Reference.]

1. Purpose of the School Advisory Council

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

[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.

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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

Members of the School Advisory Council

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 [School name] 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:

[Guidance Note 2 to principals: Two options have been provided under the prescribed/mandatory category (b) below. One option should be selected depending on the canonical ownership of the school prior to the transfer to MACS on 1 January 2021.

*The first option (b) should be selected in the case of a regional college where an association of parishes (known as an association of canonical administrators) was operating the school prior to the transfer to MACS. A special role is preserved for all priests of the member parishes of such associations in the continued operation of the school as custodians of mission in both the member parishes and the school. Therefore, a key standing position on the School Advisory Council is reserved and must be maintained at all times. The priests of the member parishes will need to nominate one of their number as a representative on the School Advisory Council. This will usually be the president of the association of canonical administrators who acts on behalf of the association in accordance with its statutes, but flexibility has been provided below for the president to nominate another person if so desired by the president or association. This should be confirmed with the president of the association. *Delete the other (b) option.*

SECONDARY SCHOOLS

*The second option (b) should be selected in the case of a secondary college that was a diocesan college where the Archbishop's appointed association of delegated canonical administrators or a canonical administrator operated the school on his delegation and direction prior to the transfer to MACS. A special role is preserved for the Archbishop or his nominee in the continued operation of the school as custodian of mission. Therefore, a key standing position on the School Advisory Council is reserved and must be maintained at all times. *Delete the other (b) option.*

Remove any asterisks.

Please remove this note and all highlighting in the final published version of this Terms of Reference.]

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**)

b) * a person nominated by the Archbishop (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

[Guidance Note 3 to principals: The School Advisory Council will need to meet the needs of the diversity of schools within MACS. Seven optional categories of member have been provided under the additional categories (f)–(l) below. Options should be selected only to reflect the variety of arrangements appropriate to each school's local context. Ex-officio positions cannot be created for employees of the MACS office, e.g. business manager (primary schools), learning consultant, regional leadership consultant, regional general manager, due to potential conflict of interest.

Insert additional members up to the recommended maximum of 10 members. These may, according to local need, include:]

f) additional parents of children attending the school*

g) additional parishioners*

h) business manager – secondary only (ex officio)*

i) staff member (particularly for secondary schools)*

j) student representative (secondary)*

k) alumni representative*

l) 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*.

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.

*[*Delete any options not selected. Alphabetical order will automatically be maintained. Remove any asterisks. Additional categories or alternative wording can be used as per the requirements of local context. Please remove this note and all highlighting in the final published version of this Terms of Reference.]*

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.

SECONDARY SCHOOLS

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 [School name] 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.

[Guidance Note 4 to principals: Please add any bullet points to the text below to demonstrate how the discernment process reflects the mission of MACS and the school.

This will ensure the development of a shared understanding of the role of the School Advisory Council so as to meet the needs of your school and parish community. Please remove this note and all highlighting in the final published version of this Terms of Reference.]

A discernment process ensures that those who have expressed an interest have had an opportunity to discern their readiness to serve. This process at [School name] 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 of 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.

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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. A 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 [School name] School Advisory Council in accordance with the requirements under Section 0: The role of individual council members in this Terms of Reference.

Expressions of interest

[Guidance Note 5 to principals: Please amend the green highlighted text to provide an outline of the process for appointing members to the School Advisory Council and how that process is made available to your school community. Please remove this note and all highlighting in the final published version of this Terms of Reference.]

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Generally, expressions of interest to become 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 [School name] School Advisory Council is [include how your school processes are publicised to the community, for example, by means of a special letter, newsletter or website]. Anyone interested in becoming a member of the [School name] 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

[Guidance Note 6 to principals: Please amend or confirm the green highlighted text to determine the period of appointment. Only green highlighted text can be amended by a MACS school without the approval of the Executive Director. Please remove this note and all highlighting in the final published version of this Terms of Reference.]

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 MACS Conflict of Interest Policy for Employees, Contractors and Consultants.

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 MACS Executive Director or board, as applicable)

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- 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

[Guidance Note 7 to principals: Please amend the green highlighted text below to demonstrate how you support new council members in being inducted to the mission of MACS and the school, and the business and processes of the council. This may include lists of further meetings, documentation, calls of welcome, follow-up calls of touching base and introduction to the community.

This will ensure the development of a shared understanding of the role of the School Advisory Council so as to meet the needs of your school and parish community.

Only green highlighted text can be amended by a MACS school without the approval of the Executive Director. Please remove this note and all highlighting in the final published version of this Terms of Reference.]

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 [School name] School Advisory Council includes:

- [state your school process of induction, e.g. 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 for Employees, Contractors and Consultants, 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 of MACS for review. The decision of the Executive Director will be final.

The principal of [School name] acts on delegation by the MACS 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 MACS 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.

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5. The role of 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 maintaining confidentiality at all times.

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 for Employees, Contractors and Consultants
- 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
- undertaking council work with reasonable care and diligence
- participating in council formation activities

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- keeping confidential the information received in the course of service as a council member
- not taking improper advantage of their position as a council member
- abiding by the applicable MACS school governance policies and key documents, including the MACS *Statement of Mission*, *Working Together in Mission* and MACS Conflict of Interest Policy for Employees, Contractors and Consultants, and the school's Child Safety Policy, Child Safety Code of Conduct and Complaints Handling Policy.

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 on the basis of 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 in order 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.

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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.

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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 more effectively provide advice 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 particular 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.

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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 of 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

Meetings

[Guidance Note 8 to principals: Please determine, at a school level, the number of meetings per year. Please remove this note and all highlighting in the final published version of this Terms of Reference.]

The [School name] School Advisory Council meets [six–eight times] during 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.

Quorum

A quorum must be present at all times 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

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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 MACS Conflict of Interest Policy for Employees, Contractors and Consultants, all council members must disclose any personal interest which relates, or may relate, to the operations of the school in order 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 for Employees, Contractors and Consultants as prescribed by MACS must at all times 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.

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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 MACS Executive Director, either generally or in any particular 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 available on the school's website at all times.

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.

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Appendix 3 – Schools belonging to a mission community comprising a family of local faith communities, or whose priest administers multiple parishes

MULTIPLE PARISHES

[School Name]
School Advisory Council Terms of Reference

MELBOURNE ARCHDIOCESE CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

Drafting note – guidance for use and tailoring for a MACS school belonging to a mission community comprising a family of local faith communities, or whose priest administers multiple parishes

This **MACS Terms of Reference for School Advisory Councils** *template is designed to assist a Melbourne Archdiocese Catholic Schools (MACS) school in establishing its School Advisory Council by creating a* Terms of Reference for [school name] School Advisory Council.docx.

The board of MACS recognises the need for each School Advisory Council to be appropriate in the context of each school. This template is for use by a MACS school belonging to a mission community comprising a family of local faith communities, or whose priest administers multiple parishes.

This Terms of Reference is to be shaped and contextualised for your school, and placed on the school website. It remains a MACS document on company letterhead and only green highlighted text can be amended by a school without the approval of the MACS Executive Director. Yellow highlighted text provides guidance notes for principals that are to be removed upon completion.

The 11 sections cannot be renumbered or removed, but you may add local contextualised points to the current sections, as indicated with green highlights, provided they are not inconsistent with the rest of the document. No additional numbered sections can be added so that, in accordance with the principle of solidarity, across MACS schools the Terms of Reference have a shared and familiar structure.

It is the primary task of principals in consultation with the parish priest to determine and co-design what model of School Advisory Council they wish to establish in alignment with the **MACS Terms of Reference for School Advisory Councils** *template.*

In a one-school, one-parish situation, there may be a single School Advisory Council; however, where multiple schools are located within a single or multiple parish community, an overarching advisory council covering all of the schools may be necessary to address matters such as catholicity, mission and religious instruction. At the same time, each school will have its own School Advisory Council to address local matters such as representation on the principal appointment panel, school improvement, master plans and knowledge about the annual budget.

Each school has the flexibility to adapt the attached **MACS Terms of Reference for School Advisory Councils** *template to suit its own particular needs in the manner outlined above and in the yellow highlighted guidance notes throughout the Terms of Reference. Further explanation can be found in the* School Advisory Council Manual *under 'Council structures'.*

It is important to recognise that the nature and role of the School Advisory Council cannot be changed, as School Advisory Councils form part of the broader governance framework of MACS.

The drafting note page, all guidance notes and all highlighting – green and yellow – are to be removed once the Terms of Reference is completed for your school. Please save the file as **Terms of Reference for [school name] School Advisory Council.docx***, replacing [school name] with your school's name, and publish a finalised copy of the Terms of Reference on your school's website.*

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[School name] is a school that operates with the consent of the Catholic Archbishop of Melbourne and is operated and governed by Melbourne Archdiocese Catholic Schools Ltd (MACS), where formation and education are based on the mission of Jesus and where the teachers are faithful in their witness to and service of that mission. Our school's particular vision and mission can be found on our website in the School Philosophy Statement.

CATHOLIC ARCHDIOCESE OF MELBOURNE

Replace with [school name] and logo

[Guidance Note 1 to principals: This Terms of Reference is to be contextualised for your school by inserting the name and logo of the school in the green highlighted placeholders. There are 15 instances, including in the header of the first page, the caption under the logo and the file name, where the placeholder for the name of the school must be replaced with your school's name. Your school logo must also replace the Archdiocese placeholder.

In addition, the school can insert a brief vision and mission here, and statements that give some clarity to the context of the logo and charism. Please limit this to between 50 and 200 words. More detailed explanations of your vision and mission can be obtained as indicated by reference to the School Philosophy Statement (MACS template) via link. Please remove this note and all highlighting in the final published version of this Terms of Reference.]

1. Purpose of the School Advisory Council

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

[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.

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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

Members of the School Advisory Council

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 [School name] 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:

[Guidance Note 2 to principals: The School Advisory Council will need to meet the needs of the diversity of schools within MACS. Four optional categories of member have been provided under the additional categories (f)–(i) below. Options should be selected only to reflect the variety of arrangements appropriate to each school's local context. Ex-officio positions cannot be created for employees of the MACS office, e.g. business manager (primary schools), learning consultant, regional leadership consultant, regional general manager, due to potential conflict of interest.

Insert additional members up to the recommended maximum of 10 members. These may, according to local need, include:]

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

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

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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*.

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.

*[Guidance Note 3 to principals: *Delete any options not selected. Alphabetical order will automatically be maintained. Remove any asterisks. Additional categories or alternative wording can be used as per the requirements of local context. Please remove this note and all highlighting in the final published version of this Terms of Reference.]*

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.

[Guidance Note 4 to principals of multiple schools within a multiple parish community: Please add the additional paragraph and amend the green highlighted text to provide an outline of the additional overarching structures or communication strategies that have been put in place to support the individual councils at each school in a situation where multiple schools are located within a multiple parish community. Please remove this note and all highlighting in the final published version of this Terms of Reference.]

Additional structures for schools within a multiple parish community

As our school is one of multiple schools located within a multiple parish community, the parish priest and principals have determined that, to support the individual councils at each school with their various differences and needs, the following additional structures have been put in place:

[Please add details of any overarching advisory council covering all of the schools. The parish priest and principals will need to discern the various differences and needs of each school within each parish context before deciding on a model. Please see the MACS *School Advisory Council Manual* for further information about possible models and strategies.

This discernment should also give consideration to the number of meetings required annually for the overarching advisory council and for each individual school, and the number of meetings the parish priest will be required to attend. See Section 8: School Advisory Council meetings and Guidance Note 9.

Whatever model is decided, the most important matter is that the parish priest and principals collaborate and meet frequently in the pursuit of maintaining the catholicity of the school and connectedness to parish, and providing what is best for the families, particularly the children, in enhancing their educational opportunities.]

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 [School name] School Advisory Council
- how council members can support the principal and the parish priest
- the appropriateness of their personal readiness to serve.

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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.

[Guidance Note 5 to principals: Please add any bullet points to the text below to demonstrate how the discernment process reflects the mission of MACS and the school.

This will ensure the development of a shared understanding of the role of the School Advisory Council so as to meet the needs of your school and parish community. Please remove this note and all highlighting in the final published version of this Terms of Reference.]

A discernment process ensures that those who have expressed an interest have had an opportunity to discern their readiness to serve. This process at [School name] 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 of 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. A 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.

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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 [School name] School Advisory Council in accordance with the requirements under Section 0: The role of individual council members in this Terms of Reference.

Expressions of interest

[Guidance Note 6 to principals: Please amend the green highlighted text to provide an outline of the process for appointing members to the School Advisory Council and how that process is made available to your school community. Please remove this note and all highlighting in the final published version of this Terms of Reference.]

Generally, expressions of interest to become 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 [School name] School Advisory Council is [include how your school processes are publicised to the community, for example, by means of a special letter, newsletter or website]. Anyone interested in becoming a member of the [School name] 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

[Guidance Note 7 to principals: Please amend or confirm the green highlighted text to determine the period of appointment. Only green highlighted text can be amended by a MACS school without the approval of the Executive Director. Please remove this note and all highlighting in the final published version of this Terms of Reference.]

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.

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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 MACS Conflict of Interest Policy for Employees, Contractors and Consultants.

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 MACS 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

[Guidance Note 8 to principals: Please amend the green highlighted text below to demonstrate how you support new council members in being inducted to the mission of MACS and the school, and the business and processes of the council. This may include lists of further meetings, documentation, calls of welcome, follow-up calls of touching base and introduction to the community.

This will ensure the development of a shared understanding of the role of the School Advisory Council so as to meet the needs of your school and parish community.

Only green highlighted text can be amended by a MACS school without the approval of the Executive Director. Please remove this note and all highlighting in the final published version of this Terms of Reference.]

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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 [School name] School Advisory Council includes:

- [state your school process of induction, e.g. 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 for Employees, Contractors and Consultants, 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 of MACS for review. The decision of the Executive Director will be final.

The principal of [School name] acts on delegation by the MACS 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 MACS 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. The role of 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

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- 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 maintaining confidentiality at all times.

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 for Employees, Contractors and Consultants
- 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
- undertaking council work with reasonable care and diligence
- participating in council formation activities
- keeping confidential the information received in the course of service as a council member
- not taking improper advantage of their position as a council member
- abiding by the applicable MACS school governance policies and key documents, including the MACS *Statement of Mission*, *Working Together in Mission* and MACS Conflict of Interest Policy for Employees, Contractors and Consultants, and the school's Child Safety Policy, Child Safety Code of Conduct and Complaints Handling Policy.

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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 on the basis of 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 in order 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.

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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.

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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 more effectively provide advice 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 particular 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.

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

The terms of reference of 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

Meetings

[Guidance Note 9 to principals: Please determine, at a school level, the number of meetings per year and, for those situations where there are multiple schools within multiple parishes, please add the additional paragraph and indicate the required minimum attendance of the parish priest at this school's School Advisory Council meetings. Please remove this note and all highlighting in the final published version of this Terms of Reference.]

The [School name] School Advisory Council meets [six–eight times] during 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.

[Please add the additional text only for those situations where the parish priest has multiple schools within multiple parishes, therefore making it unreasonable to expect, given the MACS board has determined that each school must have its own School Advisory Council, they can personally attend every School Advisory Council meeting at each school.]

To support the parish priest in maintaining a presence on our School Advisory Council, given that the parish priest has multiple schools within a multiple parish community, they would only be required to attend a minimum of [number] meeting[s] per [period – i.e. term/semester/year]. Additional information regarding this arrangement can be added here, such as suggested delegations and alternative communication strategies.

In the event that 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 present at all times 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

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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 MACS Conflict of Interest Policy for Employees, Contractors and Consultants, all council members must disclose any personal interest which relates, or may relate, to the operations of the school in order 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 for Employees, Contractors and Consultants as prescribed by MACS must at all times 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 MACS Executive Director, either generally or in any particular instance.

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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 available on the school's website at all times.

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.

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