

School Advisory Councils

Establishing a School Advisory Council
in your school



MELBOURNE
ARCHDIOCESE
CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

School Advisory Councils in MACS schools

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

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

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

Terms of Reference

In establishing a School Advisory Council it is important for the custodian of mission* to collaborate with the school principal in order to familiarise themselves with the MACS *Terms of Reference for School Advisory Councils* so that proper procedures are followed. These conversations at a local level can also be informed by reference to the *Statement of Mission* and the *Working Together in Mission: Charter for parishes and schools in the Archdiocese of Melbourne*.

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

A suggested process:

- Develop a carefully worded advertisement for the school and parish newsletter asking for expressions of interest to be a member of the School Advisory Council. The advertisement needs to be simple and brief indicating the purpose of the council, its advisory nature and that expressions of interest are open to all parents and that no particular expertise is necessarily required. (See [Support documentation](#))
- Once expressions of interest are gathered, the custodian of mission and principal review the applicants and make a selection using a process appropriate to your local context.
- It is essential for the selected parents to be inclusive of all community members and demonstrate a genuine commitment to gender equity and diversity regardless of socio-economic and cultural backgrounds.
- For all schools it is required that one parishioner be appointed. A parishioner is a person known to be active in the parish. In order to maintain the connection between parish and school it is envisaged that the parishioner who is a member of the School Advisory Council will

* The term custodian of mission is used interchangeably for 'parish priest', 'canonical administrators' or 'Archbishop's nominee'.

liaise with, or may have membership of, the Parish Pastoral Council to maintain communication between school and parish.

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

Next Steps

1. **Read and become familiar** with the following which are all available online: [School Advisory Councils](https://governance.melbourne/school-advisory-councils/) <https://governance.melbourne/school-advisory-councils/>:

- [MACS Statement of Mission](#)
- [Working Together in Mission](#)
- [Terms of Reference for School Advisory Councils](#).

2. **View** the following web sites:

- [MACS: Who we are](#)
- [MACS: Why MACS?](#)

3. **Review and modify** *Terms of Reference for School Advisory Councils* to your context.

4. **Formally move** to close any PEAB or School Board and establish a School Advisory Council adopting your modified Terms of Reference for your school

5. **Communicate with your community** by promoting the links above, referring people to [FAQ](#) and by working through the following steps with the suggested resources:

- Letter to school and parish community informing them of the establishment of a school advisory council. Template letters for [Transitioning Councils](#) and [New Councils](#).
- Advertise in school and parish newsletter for self-nominations/written expressions of interest to the principal. Template for [advertisement](#).
- [Discernment](#) between principal and custodian of mission to see which members are the best fit for the schools local context
- Inform successful members with a letter of appointment. Template for [letter of appointment](#)
- Appropriate induction/formation for members to occur

In addition you can add the following to the school's website:

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

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

