



St Francis Xavier School Advisory Council Terms of Reference



Introduction

St Francis Xavier is a school operated with the consent of the Catholic Archbishop of Melbourne. It is owned, operated, and governed by Melbourne Archdiocese Catholic Schools Ltd (MACS).

School Motto: "Let Happiness Dwell Here"

In the Franciscan spirit, our vision is for a school that:

1 Catholic Tradition

Is grounded in Catholic tradition and spirituality, in which the Gospel values of trust, respect, forgiveness and care underpin everyday teaching and learning.

2 Learning environment

Provides a high-quality learning environment that:

- Cultivates effective learners-for-life by committing to informed and current teaching and learning practices.
- Values the key role teachers play in supporting children's personal growth, recognising that they are responsible for enhancing the quality and standard of student learning outcomes.
- Consistently offers learning activities involving the continuing acquisition of knowledge and skills so that learners can apply these critically to understand and participate effectively as responsible citizens in their world.

3 Environment

Encourages respect, responsibility and care for creation, where an awareness of the environment and its species is developed and promoted

4 Wellbeing

Enhances the well-being of all in an environment of justice, inclusiveness, tolerance, equality and compassion, in which harmony and healthy relationships are promoted through the development of social skills, self-worth, affirmation and the celebration of achievements

5 Collaboration

Is a learning community in which teamwork and collaboration are central to everyday practice

6 Community

Is a place in which clergy, parents, teachers, and students build and nurture a healthy, growing community

1. Purpose of the School Advisory Council

The MACS board is responsible for the strategic direction and oversight of the operation and management of MACS schools, including St Francis Xavier. Clear lines of authority, reporting, and delegation from the MACS board through the Executive Director delegate the day-to-day operational management of St Francis Xavier 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 parent¹ voices and community perspectives are available to inform and support the decisions made by the principal and parish priest as the custodian of mission for the good of the 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. It 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.

School Advisory Council members must 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 establishing 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
- advising 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
- advising the principal about the school master plan
- providing capital resource planning and maintenance support to the principal.

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.

3. Council structure

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 and strengthens community links and potential partnerships.

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The St Francis Xavier 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:

- 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) a representative of the Parents & Friends
- f) 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
- g) any other person who, in the opinion of the principal, has the relevant knowledge, skills, expertise, interest, and commitment to the mission of the school*.

A Council member under any category from (a) to (e) may satisfy the eligibility criteria under more than one category.

At the principal's discretion, school staff members may be invited to attend meetings from time to time, depending on the agenda's content.

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 the school
- the roles, responsibilities and processes of MACS and the St Francis Xavier 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 Council's role 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.

A discernment process ensures that those who have expressed an interest have been able to discern their readiness to serve. This process at St Francis Xavier 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 for the appointment of Council members

The principal has the power to appoint, reappoint, and remove 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 discernment process. 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 remember the need to balance 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 fulfil a need on the Council otherwise; 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. Preference will be given to new appointees over a repeat nominee (someone previously on the Council, had leave and returned) to ensure ongoing diversity and renewal.

Key considerations in the 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 the members observe high standards of community, group and individual behaviour 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 free from fraud or corruption or the perception of fraud or corruption. Conflict of interest arises when 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 Council committees. 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 St Francis Xavier School Advisory Council in accordance with the requirements under Section 5: The role of individual Council members in this Terms of Reference.

Expressions of interest

Generally, expressions of interest in becoming a Council member are made before the set annual appointment round devised by the Council. The process of applying for the St Francis Xavier School Advisory Council membership is to write a short email outlining the reasons for interest in becoming a member of the Council and relevant experience. The roles are advertised in the school newsletter in Term 4 where required. Anyone interested in becoming a member of the St Francis Xavier School Advisory Council may seek advice from the principal, chair or parish priest on the appointment process. To ensure continuing institutional memory, consideration will also be given to succession planning through staggered renewal of members.

Terms and conditions of appointment

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 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 an appointment email from the principal and parish priest. A condition of the 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 appointment email 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 the 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 Conflict of Interest Policy.

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 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 (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

The induction process continues after the 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 St Francis Xavier School Advisory Council includes:

- an initial meeting/conversation with the Principal, provision of reference material, an Induction Meeting with the Council and the option of debriefing after meetings.

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, 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 or is engaged in conduct unbecoming of a Council member or prejudicial to the interests of the school. In consultation with the parish priest, the principal will outline the reasons for the removal of Council members in writing.

A Council member may appeal their removal to the Executive Director for review. The Executive Director's decision is final.

The principal of St Francis Xavier acts on delegation by the Executive Director, who in turn acts on delegations from the MACS board. No delegation of power prevents the exercise of power directly by the Executive Director or the MACS board, as relevant. For the avoidance of doubt, the 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. Role of the 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 that benefit 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 always maintaining confidentiality.

Expectations of the Council member

Each Council member, in addition to the 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
- 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

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 in the Council, and each 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

Depending on the local context, the principal appoints the chair through either discernment of the Council's will in consultation with the parish priest or, after a discernment process, election by the Council members from among their number. This would occur at the Council's first meeting after the end of the previous chair's term.

The chair will normally be an independent member not employed by MACS at the school or otherwise and is selected based on the person's skills, competencies and record as a leader.

The chair's term aligns with their term of office as a Council member. The chair's office will terminate if they cease to be a Council member, whether by expiry of their term, resignation or removal. The chair does not have a casting vote besides their ordinary vote as a Council member.

The principal

Key responsibilities of the principal's role include developing the faith community, focusing particularly on the safety and well-being of students, formulating a vision for the whole school, paying attention to contemporary teaching and learning to engage all students, and stewardship of the people and resources with particular outreach to the parent community.

The principal collaborates with the parish priest, staff members of the school community, and MACS management to achieve the school's mission.

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 being the school's principal. A duly appointed acting principal will fulfil this role during the principal's absence. The principal has full voting rights and is counted as usual for quorum purposes.

The parish priest

The parish priest, as the custodian of mission, has a key role in supporting the school in its distinctive Catholic identity, spirituality, and life by continuing 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 evangelist and educator in faith within the parish and thus the custodian of mission of the parish and school, provide guidance to the 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, guiding the Council and bringing 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 the property is beneficially owned by a juridic person which the custodian of mission represents, i.e. a parish or groups of parishes).

Appointment

As the custodian of mission, the parish priest 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 before the meeting
- oversee the 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 school's size and local context. Each committee advises 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 provide advice more effectively 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, committees can indicate to the community that the Council is giving voice to issues.

Smaller schools may not benefit from a formal committee structure because their Councils are often quite small, and operations are not as complex. From time to time, the Council may also wish to

establish a committee or working party for a specific purpose or undertake a particular task, such as 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 for 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, and 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 will 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 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 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 the last report, what's happening now, future plans, items for Council discussion
 - the duration of the committee/working party.

Any Council committee or working party must understand that it may not speak publicly for the Council.

The principal should approve the terms of reference for each committee or working party of the Council and maintain appropriate records 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

The St Francis Xavier School Advisory Council meets at least once a term with a maximum of [six–eight] meetings 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 Council members to prepare. Minutes will be taken at each meeting.

If 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 before the meeting's commencement.

Quorum

A quorum must always be present at each Council meeting for the meeting to be validly constituted and for all discussion and agreement by consensus made at the meeting to be valid. The meeting quorum is two-thirds of the total 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, conversations must be 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 before the meeting, and any important proposal will have been highlighted and relevant documentation circulated. This will allow informed dialogue to occur 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. Sometimes, there may be occasion to formally declare an issue, paper, or discussion particularly sensitive and confidential. This should be done by the chair before a Council meeting and confirmed before the close of the meeting.

Council members must respect individuals' right 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 Council's well-being.

A meeting should close by reviewing actions and deadlines set and noting the details of the next meeting.

Disclosure of interests by Council, committee and working group members

In accordance with the Conflict of Interest Policy, all Council members must disclose any personal interest that relates or may relate, to the operations of the school 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.

All Council members and the members of any committee or working group established by the Council must always comply with the Conflict of Interest Policy.

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 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 Council's evaluation in the following year.

This report will 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 Executive Director, generally or in any 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 the 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 consistently 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 Council should approve the minutes at its next meeting as an accurate record of the meeting.

Council minutes are not public documents. However, a brief report approved by the principal may appear in the school and parish newsletters to communicate the council's work to the community.

Publication of this Terms of Reference

An up-to-date version of the Terms of Reference must always be available on the school's website.

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 on 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.

Definitions

Conflict of interest

A conflict of interest arises where an individual's personal interest conflicts with their responsibility to act in the best interests of MACS or its subsidiaries, MACSS and MACSEYE, as the context requires.

Melbourne Catholic Archdiocese Schools Ltd (MACS)

MACS refers to Melbourne Archdiocese Catholic Schools Ltd and/or its subsidiaries, MACSS and/or MACSEYE (as the context requires).

MACS school or school

A school that operates with the consent of the Catholic Archbishop of Melbourne and is owned, operated and governed by MACS, directly or through MACSS (as the context requires). References to schools or MACS schools also include boarding premises of schools operated by MACS and specialist schools operated by MACSS.

School Advisory Council

Supports the principal of a MACS school by providing a forum for discussion and discernment where parent voice and community perspective can help inform decision-making.

Volunteer

A person who performs work without remuneration or reward for MACS, a MACS school or MACSEYE service (as the context requires) in the school/service environment.

Related policies and documents

Related MACS policies and documents

Working Together in Mission
 School Advisory Council Manual
 Code of Conduct for MACS

Policy information

Responsible director	Director, Catholic Mission and Identity
Policy owner	Director, Catholic Mission and Identity
Approving authority	Executive Director
Assigned board committee	Catholic Mission and Identity
Approval date	3 April 2024
Risk Rating	High
Review by	2026

Publication	MACS website, CEVN, school website
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POLICY DATABASE INFORMATION	
Assigned framework	Governance
Supporting documents	See list of supporting documents and related policies above
Superseded documents	School Advisory Councils – Terms of Reference – Single parish – v1.0 – 2021 School Advisory Councils – Terms of Reference – Multiple parishes – v1.0 – 2021 School Advisory Councils – Terms of Reference – Secondary schools – v1.0 - 2021
New policy	New