



The School Advisory Council

The Place of the School Advisory Council in Catholic Schools

The work of the School Advisory Council takes place within the context of the work of the Catholic Church, educating its young people in the Catholic faith and for full participation in society. Key principles underpinning this are *partnership* and *service*.

Partnership

School Advisory Councils enable a spirit of partnership to be developed within the school community. They are constituted in such a way that allows the various bodies within the school to be represented and to participate in the development of the school and its management. Council meetings are times when the Catholic education community meet and work together for the holistic development of students, taking into consideration both educational and spiritual welfare.

Through partnership, and by the coming together of various people with a range of gifts and talents, the school will become a stronger community and be more effective in its religious dimension, individual identity and educational charter.

Service

The Church is not simply an organisation to which members belong. A vision of Church, *as a people of God*, invites its members, to take an active service role in Catholic Schools.

The School Advisory Council is one of the ways that allows parents the opportunity for greater involvement. The school Council member, by offering to be of service to the school community, enriches the school and contributes to building a Catholic culture that ensures the welfare of the community.

Structure of the School Advisory Council

School Advisory Councils are important as they bring together, in a formal setting, the significant parties concerned with the provision of education for young people in a particular school.

The School Advisory Council provides the occasion for the community to consider the needs and wellbeing of their school through:

- discernment and a spirit of cooperation to arrive at decisions;
- mutual respect and trust to achieve the common good; and
- Council members cooperating, valuing others, listening in the community, having a clear sense of the purpose of Catholic Schools and a commitment to building the Kingdom of God.

The School Advisory Council should be a clear sign of the partnership between parish and school, parents and staff, the school and Catholic Education as a whole, and between the school community and the broader Church community and society.

Role of the School Advisory Council in a Catholic School

The School Advisory Council is responsible to the Conference of Bishops through CECWA for planning, the financial management of the School and to provide advice on policy formation.

The overall role of the Council is to help the school fulfil its educational responsibilities in accordance with the constitution, the policies, guidelines and practices of CECWA and diocesan guidelines.

Functions of the Council

The Council shall carry out the following functions in pursuit of its objectives:

- (a) planning for the present and future operation of the school
- (b) providing membership on selection panels for the employment of staff to the school in accordance with CECWA policy;
- (c) providing membership on the panel which recommends the appointment of a Principal in accordance with CECWA policy;
- (d) disseminating information about the school and about Catholic education to persons and organisations in the local Catholic community;
- (e) liaising in all matters relating to the financial management of the school with persons and organisations in the local Catholic community;
- (f) managing all finances associated with the School; and
- (g) advising the Principal with respect to School policy.

Council Focus

The Council is entrusted with the duty of planning, on behalf of the school community, with the school staff (through the Principal) and with the CECWA to meet the present and future needs of the students.

Although the Council has no authority in the internal operation of the school, it is a legitimate function of the Council to provide an advisory service to the Principal and staff with respect to policy formation and review. In carrying out this role, the Council is *advisory*, rather than operational or administrative. The Council's sole connection to the operation of the school is through the Principal.

The Council has no managerial responsibility for the staff, this being delegated to the Principal by the Bishop of the Diocese.

Again, the School Advisory Council should be a clear sign of the partnership between parish and school, parents and staff, the school and Catholic education as a whole, and between the school community and the broader Church community and society.

Membership of the Council

Members of the School Advisory Council, as decision makers in Catholic education, show the value they place on Catholic ethos by the way they pursue the school's vision and aims. Members will support its Christian community, focused as it is, upon the person of Jesus Christ and reflect genuine concern for the formation of students as Christian women and men.

Council members receive no special treatment, favour or advantage from their position on the Council. If a potential for a conflict of interest (personal or financial) should arise, Council

members must declare their interest and not participate in the decision-making process relating to issues in which they have an interest.

Criteria for Membership of the Council

Membership of the School Advisory Council is based on:

- possession of an enthusiasm for, and a willingness to promote Catholic schooling;
- a deep interest in the welfare of all students and staff;
- a desire to give service to the Catholic school community;
- an ability to work co-operatively and constructively with all other members of the Council;
- sufficiency of time to devote to Council duties;
- an ability and desire to uphold confidentiality in Council matters; and
- possession of special skills that will be an asset to the Council.

Council members provide a service in the Christian tradition, and they serve the School Community according to their particular skills- it is a *shared ministry*. As such, it draws upon the shared wisdom of its members, working together as Christians both to support the ethos of the Catholic School, and to provide the material needs of the school. School Advisory Council members need to be well informed about relevant educational issues. They need time to reflect and think on matters to be discussed, and they need to prepare thoroughly for each meeting.

Many Thanks

Mrs Tanya McGuire
Principal