



School Advisory Committee Terms of Reference

St Kevin's Primary School is a school which 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 principles of Catholic doctrine, and where the teachers are outstanding in true doctrine and uprightness of life.

1. **Committee structure**

Members of the School Advisory Committee

Serving on the School Advisory Committee 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 committee provides rich sources of wisdom and insight as well as a means of strengthening community links and potential for partnerships.

St Kevin's School Advisory Committee is to be comprised of a minimum of six (6) committee members who value and share the educational mission and ethos of the Catholic Church comprising of at least:

- (a) the parish priest for primary (ex officio)
- (b) the principal (ex officio)
- (c) two (2) parents, guardians, carers of children attending the school
- (d) one (1) parishioner
- (e) another person from either category or co-opted to serve a particular need on the committee.

Membership under (c) and (d) are not mutually exclusive.

Additional members up to the recommended maximum of ten (10) members may, according to local need, include:

- (f) additional parents, guardians, carers of children attending the school
- (g) additional parishioners
- (h) business manager
- (i) staff member (particularly for secondary schools)
- (j) student representative (secondary)
- (k) alumni representative
- (l) other person co-opted for a period of time to serve a particular need on the committee.

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.

A single parish representative may be sufficient for a committee fulfilling its function in dealing with education matters relating to the school.

Recruitment and appointment of committee members

The principal and parish priest/canonical administrator are responsible for appointing committee members, after a process of discernment. The principal and priest may choose to be supported by others in the appointment process. Each school has the opportunity to establish its own practice of how to form the School Advisory Committee whether it be by expressions of interest, by nomination or whatever means the parish priest/canonical administrator and principal determine meets its needs at the local level. When appointments are being made it is important to keep in mind the need for a balance of gender, diversity and skill sets in forming the committee.

If the committee requires the appointment of a committee member to maintain a quorum or to fill a casual vacancy, the principal may make such an appointment, however any committee member appointed in such a circumstance is appointed for the period to the next Annual School Advisory Committee Meeting and at this time may apply for membership of the committee in the ordinary manner.

Once appointed it is a requirement that all committee members sign the school *Child Safety Code of Conduct*.

Child Safe Standards

Adherence to the school's child safe standards must be at the forefront of any appointment process. Committee members must have both a police check and Working with Children check and must sign the school child safe standard agreement.

Expressions of Interest

Generally, expressions of interest to become a committee member are made in advance of the Annual School Advisory Committee Meeting. The process of applying for membership of the St Kevin's School Advisory Committee is *publicised to the community in newsletters, by means of a special letter by the Principal*. Anyone interested in becoming a member of the St. Kevin's School Advisory Committee 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.

Diversity

St Kevin's School Advisory Committee seeks to be inclusive of all community members and will demonstrate a genuine commitment to gender equity and diversity regardless of socio-economic and cultural backgrounds.

Collectively, committee members should bring a range of personal skills and experience to add value to the *St. Kevin's School Advisory Committee*; for further information see 'The role of individual committee members' in this document.

A process of discernment

The process of appointment is one of discernment, where interested persons are involved in a discernment process to assist potential new committee members to understand:

- the mission and vision of MACS, the parish and school
- the roles, responsibilities and processes of the MACS Board and the *St. Kevin's School Advisory Committee*
- how committee members can support the principal and parish priest.

This discernment process commences when expressions of interest are sought for new committee members, beginning with the provision of an information pack to those interested in nominating for a committee position and /or a chance for potential nominees to discuss the role of the committee and the expectations of a committee member with the principal, chair or parish priest/canonical administrator.

Leading to induction

The process of discernment provides the foundation for the induction of new committee members. 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 *MACS School Advisory Committee Manual*. Formal induction to the *St Kevin's School Advisory Committee* includes:

- *Induction session*
- *Calls of welcome*
- *Further meetings*
- *Follow up for debriefing*
- *Introduction to the community*

New committee members will be provided with:

- the *MACS Statement of Mission*
- an understanding of the history of the parish and school
- a *MACS School Advisory Committee Manual*
- a tour of the school facilities.

Terms and conditions of appointment

The period of appointment is generally a term of *three years*, with the option of being reappointed for a total of three terms. The other terms and conditions of appointment of committee members are contained in a letter of appointment from the principal which sets out, amongst other things:

- the terms and conditions in the letter of appointment that must be agreed to by the proposed committee member
- details of expectations of committee members
- applicable MACS school governance policies, including the applicable *Code of Conduct*, *Conflict Resolution Procedure*, and *Conflict of Interest Policy*.

A committee member may be removed by the principal in collaboration with the parish priest/canonical administrator if a committee member is in breach of the expectations of a committee member (as outlined in this Terms of Reference) or applicable MACS school governance policies. A committee member may appeal his or her removal to the Executive Director of MACS for review.

2. Role of the School Advisory Committee

From 1 January 2021, the Board of Melbourne Archdiocese Catholic Schools Ltd (MACS) has responsibility for the strategic direction and oversight of the operation and management of MACS Catholic schools, including St. Kevin's. Clear lines of authority, reporting and delegation have been established which delegate the day to day operational management of St. Kevin's to the 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 led by every member of the Catholic school community", the School Advisory Committee provides a crucial point of connection between the wider school community and school leaders. While the School Advisory Committee does not have a decision-making authority, it informs, advises and supports the principal and school leadership.

Advisory in nature

The School Advisory Committee provides a forum for discussion and discernment, where the parent/guardian voice and perspective are available to inform and support the decisions made by the principal and parish priest for the good of school and parish where the wellbeing and outcomes for students is paramount.

School Advisory Committees do not have a legal identity and do not become involved in the day-to-day management of the school.

It is important that School Advisory Committee members understand that their role is to give consideration to, and advice on, important school matters in order to support the principal in the context of the MACS governance arrangements. The School Advisory Committee must act within the parameters of this Terms of Reference.

MACS provides support to the School Advisory Committee, such as policy guidance and templates for the work of the committee, but is not responsible for the activities of the committee, utilising principles of subsidiarity and solidarity.

The following are some ways the School Advisory Committee supports the school and the principal:

- Promoting the school's Catholic ethos and culture

- Articulating and enacting the school's vision and mission
- Promoting faith formation and development
- Capital resource planning and maintenance
- Disseminating information about the school in accordance with these Terms of Reference
- Implementing school policies as required
- Supporting and communicating school and parish matters, including the school annual report
- Giving advice on issues such as enrolments, school improvement plans and enrolment trends
- Engaging in discussion about the annual school budget and other financial matters
- Giving advice about the school Master Plan

3. The role of individual committee members

Qualities and skills of a committee member

Each Catholic school is different, but all schools share the mission of the Church. The committee should be composed of people who appreciate, value and share the educational mission and ethos of the Catholic Church. When seeking committee members it is important to reflect on the qualities and skills of benefit to the committee in carrying out its functions. Their capacity to contribute, their shared understanding and their positivity is essential.

The following is a list of some of the key qualities and skills for members of the School Advisory Committee:

- 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
- an understanding of the role of parish priest, principal and committee members
- willingness to ask questions and seek clarification
- ability to think strategically
- willingness to support the contributions of other committee 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 committee member

Each committee member is required to commit to the following:

- understanding the committee's role
- having a positive and constructive attitude
- elevating any appropriate issues for consideration by the committee
- preparing for committee meetings
- attending each committee meeting, unless there are extenuating circumstances
- bringing expertise and views to discussions on behalf of the whole community
- participating actively and responsibly
- participating in committee work
- participating in committee formation activities

- attendance at the MACS Annual General Meeting, if possible
- abiding by the applicable MACS school governance policies, including *MACS Statement of Mission, Code of Conduct and Conflicts of Interest Policy*.

4. Key roles

There are four key roles on a School Advisory Committee. The Chair, the principal, the parish priest and the secretary each have a significant role on the committee and each of these roles carries specific responsibilities.

The Chair

The role of the Chair is to:

- chair committee meetings
- in conjunction with the principal and the secretary oversee the development of meeting agendas, checks papers for meetings and the draft minutes
- ensure the meetings are focused on the agenda
- encourage participation by all committee members in meetings and at committee events
- act as a spokesperson for the committee when authorised to do so
- attend important parish and school events as appropriate
- participate as a member of the committee.

Appointment

The Chair is elected by a quorum of the committee members at the first meeting of the committee after the end of the term of the previous Chair.

The Chair will normally be an independent member who is not employed by MACS or St. Kevin's and is selected on the basis of the person's achievements and his or her record as a leader.

The Chair is appointed for a period of three years, subject to satisfactory performance. As the Chair will likely have served as a committee member prior to appointment, the Chair's total time on the committee may extend to two terms (three to six years).

A Chair may be removed by the principal if the Chair is in breach of the expectations of a committee member or the Chair (as outlined in this Terms of Reference) or applicable MACS school governance policies. A Chair may appeal his or her removal to the Executive Director of MACS for review.

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 Church authority, staff and members of the school community to achieve the mission of the school.

As such the principal's role on the committee as an ex officio member is to:

- play a key role in developing the overall goals and priorities of the committee

- play a key role in developing the agenda for meetings and the preparation of papers before meetings
- ensure follow-up of actions arising from committee meetings
- act as the chief education advisor to the committee
- make arrangements to maintain an archive of relevant committee 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
- make arrangements to distribute draft minutes to the committee members, after preparation by the secretary
- ensure that committee members are kept informed between meetings
- make arrangements to maintain a register and record of committee, 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 Committee while in his or her role. The principal has full voting rights and is counted in the usual way for quorum purposes.

The parish priest

The parish priest is to:

- be the key evangeliser and educator in faith within the parish and thus the custodian of mission of parish and school
- support the principal and committee in the development and implementation of the sacramental program to ensure the school is faithful to its distinctive Catholic identity and spirituality
- provide strong pastoral support and effective Catholic leadership of the parish, which includes the school and college communities
- be engaged with, and bring to the committee's attention, those aspects of the school's operations that have the potential to harm the parish's good name
- represent the parish as the beneficial owner of the land occupied by the school or college
- be involved in planning any transaction that will change the nature of the school property or affect the use of any other areas of the property.

The parish priest is an ex officio member of the School Advisory Committee for parish primary schools in his parish, and ensures that the School Advisory Committee supports the principal and the mission of the parish.

Appointment

As an ex officio member of the committee by virtue of his office. 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 committee 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 committee correspondence
- oversee the provision of adequate notice of the Annual School Advisory Committee Meeting and of any intention to call for nominations for committee positions that become vacant.

Appointment

The secretary is appointed by the committee at the first meeting of the committee after the end of the term of the previous secretary.

5. Committees and working parties

To share and support the work of the School Advisory Committee, the committee may consider establishing a standing committee.

From time to time the committee may also wish to establish a committee or working party for a specific purpose or to undertake a particular task.

The committee may appoint additional members of a committee or working group to assist with deliberations in the manner determined by the committee in each instance.

Committee committees and working groups may be focused on a specific area such as:

- finance
- policy
- capital improvements
- reputation management
- parent/guardian/carer engagement
- community development
- grants

Each committee or working party should be chaired by a committee member who is responsible for reporting to the committee on the activities of the committee/working party.

Committee committees/working parties are directly responsible to the committee.

Each committee/working party of the committee should have clearly articulated expectations or terms of reference 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
- quorum, meeting and reporting requirements
- the date for reporting back to the committee e.g. actions since last report, what's happening now, future plans, items for committee discussion
- duration of the committee/working party.

It is important that any committee or working party understands that it may not speak publicly for the committee, unless it has delegated authority to do so.

The terms of reference of each committee or working party of the committee 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 committee's annual report to acknowledge the specific work undertaken by the committee or working party during the year.

6. School Advisory Committee meetings

Meetings

The St. Kevin's School Advisory Committee meets 4-6 times during the year with the Annual School Advisory Committee Meeting being one of these scheduled meetings. Apart from the Annual Meeting, ordinary committee meetings are not public meetings.

Committees may call extraordinary meetings if required.

Agendas should be prepared and distributed prior to each meeting.

Quorum

A quorum must be present at each committee meeting. The quorum of members who must be present for any decisions of a meeting to be binding or valid is two-thirds of the total number of committee members at any given time.

Conduct of committee meetings

Committee confidentiality and solidarity are key ingredients in building trust at committee meetings. As a general rule all committee meeting proceedings are confidential. At times, there may be occasion to formally declare an issue, a paper and/or a discussion as particularly sensitive and confidential. This should be done by the Chair prior to a committee meeting, and confirmed before the close of the meeting.

Committee members must respect the right of individuals to express their views freely at committee meetings without fear of their being named outside the committee meetings as taking particular positions. As in all similar groups, a sense of trust among committee members is vital for the wellbeing of the committee.

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

Minutes of committee meetings should be maintained.

Disclosure of interests by committee, committee and working group members

All committee, committee and working group members must disclose to the principal and Chair of the committee, committee or working group (as applicable) any personal interest or duty which relates, or may relate, to the business of the school, in order to ensure that any actual or perceived conflict of interest or duty is identified and appropriately managed.

When an issue arises at a committee, committee or working group meeting, relating to such an interest or duty, the member must not attend the meeting while that matter is discussed and must not vote on any related matter.

7. The Annual School Advisory Committee Meeting

The committee encourages full participation of stakeholders at the Annual School Advisory Committee Meeting to ensure a high level of engagement and participation by the school community.

The Annual School Advisory Committee Meeting of the committee may take place at any time during the year but normally takes place in the final term of the school year.

The parish and school communities must receive adequate notice of this meeting and of any intention to accept any nominations for any committee positions that become vacant.

The agenda for the Annual School Advisory Committee Meeting is determined by the committee and normally includes:

- presentation of the committee's annual report by the Chair
- provision for questions from those present
- the announcement of newly appointed committee members.

The committee's *Annual Report* is an important communication document and is to be drafted using the MACS approved template. Preparation of the committee's *Annual Report* is to be overseen by the Chair with the final version approved by the committee. The committee's *Annual Report* should acknowledge the activities, achievements and challenges of the committee over the past year and indicates goals and focus for the following year. This report may also form part of the 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.

8. Record keeping

As a minimum, the principal must ensure the maintenance of the following committee documents and records:

- the School Advisory Committee Terms of Reference (this document)
- agenda and minutes of School Advisory Committee, committee and working group meetings
- a register of the current members of the committee, committees and working groups and any committee members holding key roles
- the School Advisory Committee correspondence file.

Agenda and minutes

The minutes of committee, committee and working group meetings must be recorded in a consistent format and maintained in an 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 committee, committee or working group (as applicable) at its next meeting, as an accurate record of the meeting.

Committee, committee and working group minutes are not public documents.

9. Evaluating the work of the committee

The School Advisory Committee must undertake an annual evaluation to reflect upon its performance and areas for improvement.

The committee must agree the process to be followed each year following a MACS template and appoint a committee member to oversee the evaluation process and, if appropriate, take a leadership role in implementing the findings. Each year the committee should consider whether any improvements to its operation or this Terms of Reference should be recommended to MACS.

The committee may determine to evaluate all aspects of its work or concentrate on some key areas. Areas for evaluation may include:

- Committee processes such as meeting procedures, planning, communication
- the work of committees or working groups
- the nature and extent of involvement of the parish and school communities
- involvement in or assistance to key parish or school projects.

10. Publication of this Terms of Reference

An up-to-date version of these Terms of Reference must be available on the school's website at all times.