



(INSERT SCHOOL NAME HERE)

School Governance Guidelines

The Catholic School
Community Council

(INSERT SCHOOL NAME HERE)

The Catholic School Community Council



Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn
CATHOLIC EDUCATION OFFICE



CATHOLIC EDUCATION COMMISSION
ARCHDIOCESE OF CANBERRA AND GOULBURN

(INSERT SCHOOL NAME HERE)

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Introduction

“The primary right of parents to educate their children must be upheld in all forms of collaboration between parents, teachers and school authorities, and particularly in forms of participation designed to give citizens a voice in the functioning of schools and in the formulation and implementation of educational policies.

*Pontifical Council on the Family
CHARTER OF THE RIGHTS OF THE FAMILY*

The Council, in accordance with the authority entrusted to it by the Archbishop, is to assist the school to fulfil its mission in accordance with the Code of Canon Law, Archdiocesan directives and guidelines and policies of the Catholic Education Commission and the Catholic Education Office.

The Council provides the opportunity for members of the school, parish and Archdiocesan communities to support the mission of Catholic education in the school. Working with the Principal, Parish Priest and staff, the members of the Council and its committees provide leadership to the wider school community.

The Council has a decision making role in certain policy areas and an advisory role in others. The policies of the school are always set within the mission of Catholic education. In the areas where it has responsibility for the development and monitoring of school policy, the Council operates within the policies and procedures determined by the CEC and the CEO.

The Principal has responsibility for the day-to-day leadership and management of the school.

The Catholic School

The Operational Guidelines for School Boards, Parents and Friends Associations and Community Councils is designed to assist members of Catholic school communities who have been appointed to or elected to serve on local parish or secondary. The guidelines explain how Catholic schools fit within the ministry of the Church in the Catholic Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn. The guidelines outline the role and responsibilities of those involved in this ministry of Catholic schooling and offers practical ways to ensure that the important work of school governance and parental participation are both effective and rewarding. The local level guidelines present in this document is derived from the Archdiocesan Guidelines.

In the Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn, the Archbishop approved the setting up of Catholic Parish School Boards in 1986, as a means of fostering the apostolate of the Catholic school within the Archdiocese. In recent years some schools have been given approval to implemented the model of Community Council as the local level governance structure.

(Insert school name here) is managed by the Catholic Education Office (CEO). It is a part of a diocesan schools system. Diocesan Primary and central schools are part of a parish community while Diocesan secondary schools are usually regional schools, serving several parishes.

The Catholic school is a community of students, staff, Pastor and parents within the parish community which is striving to imbue the education process with Gospel values and actively model a Catholic lifestyle. In all its actions the school community should aim to be Christ-like ensuring that each member is treated with justice, compassion and love.

The Catholic school community should be a place of hope, allowing all members to experience wonder, learning and peace while working for

the common good and building up the Kingdom of God.

While members of the community take different roles, as Pastor Principal, staff, teachers, parents and students, all are responsible for helping to ensure that the school is Christ-centred and that it witnesses to the Gospel.

The Catholic school community is a ministry of the wider Church. To ensure that it strives to fulfil this ministry, those who contribute to its leadership as members of the local governance structures need to develop constantly their understanding and commitment to the Catholic Church's mission in education.

In the Context of the Australian Community

Catholic schooling is different from government education systems in that it seeks to integrate Catholic values into all its aspects. It is committed to educating the whole person with the person's spiritual dimension as an essential element.

Although Catholic schooling is different from the government education system, it is still bound by the accountability requirements of the Australian Government, and State or Territory Governments for any government funding. The educational standards, facilities and personnel of Catholic schools come under government supervision of one kind or another. This accountability is managed by the Catholic Education Office (CEO) and monitored by the Catholic Education Commission (CEC).

Australian, State or Territory Government funding is a significant part of the overall income of Catholic schooling for recurrent costs eg. salaries.

Catholic schools may be eligible for capital funding according to the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) guidelines, and if capital projects are approved by the Australian Government.

Catholic schooling makes a positive contribution to the community, and accordingly, is recognised through government financial support.

Parents and members of Catholic parishes make a very substantial financial contribution to Catholic schooling and in this way make a substantial contribution to the Australian community.

Archdiocesan Level

The Archbishop has the canonical authority to define policy regarding the establishment and operation of Catholic schools within the Archdiocese. He has established parish primary schools, parish central schools and regional secondary schools within the Archdiocese. Congregational schools have also been established with his consent and operate under his general pastoral supervision.

Catholic schools are an integral part of the on-going life and faith education process. They hold a unique place and play an essential role in the mission of the parish(es) in which they are located and for the wider Archdiocesan Church. The Catholic school as a faith community lives in, and not separate from, the larger faith community of the parish. Responsibilities for the management of Diocesan Catholic schools are shared by the Archbishop, the CEC, the CEO, Parish Priests, Principals and school staffs, and the local school governance structure,, according to the Church's code of Canon Law, and policies and procedures approved by the Archbishop or his delegates.

In 1985 the Archbishop established the CEC to develop and monitor policies related to schools and the ministry of Catholic education. Such policies become official in the Archdiocese when approved by the Archbishop.

The establishment of the CEC reflects an appreciation of the Church as a community where all members engage in a process of discernment and offer service to the Church and school community.

The CEC has, in addition to its ex-officio members, members selected for their capacity and interests from a cross section of the Archdiocese to reflect the interests of Priests, parents, schools and the wider Catholic community. Members serve for terms of 4 years.

The Commission may establish Working Parties to investigate, discuss and make recommendations to the Commission on issues determined by the Commission. The Working Parties are established on a needs basis and follow a clearly prescribed Terms of Reference.

The Director of the CEO, who is appointed by the Archbishop, is the Executive Secretary of the CEC.

The Catholic Education Commission works closely with the Catholic Education Office which monitors and implements CEC Policy. The CEO is also a valuable source of information and expertise in the development of the CEC's policies.

The CEO has its own policy making and executive functions. The Director is responsible for the management of the school system and the implementation of Archdiocesan education policies and is the delegated employer of all staff in Archdiocesan Catholic schools.

Local Parish Level

The Parish Priest is the leader of the parish community of which the school is an integral part and has a vital role in the education of all parishioners. Under the authority of the Archbishop, he has the responsibility for promoting the spiritual and moral development of all Catholic adults and children entrusted to his care. In consultation with the Parish Pastoral Council, the Parish Priest makes the final decision on the pastoral goals of the parish.

The style of governance of Catholic schools strives to maintain and support the Parish Priest in his responsibility of integrating the school into the parish family.

The school governance structure and parent participation is an integral part of the parish. It liaises with the Parish Pastoral Council and the Parish Finance Committee. With the Parish Priest, as an ex officio member, it undertakes its ministry in collaboration with the parish(es) it serves.

The school governance structure, in association with the Principal and the Parish Priest, makes policy decisions for the school in accordance with their specific and specialised responsibilities.

While the school governance structure is a specialised agency, it must keep in mind that the Parish Priest, in consultation with the Parish Pastoral Council and the Parish Finance Committee, has oversight of the whole parish and makes policies for the pastoral and financial good of the whole parish. Therefore, there must be close relationships

between the Parish Priest and his Parish Pastoral Council and Parish Finance Committee and the school's governing body.

The Family

Parents are recognised as the first educators of children in faith and in life.

The Catholic school, with the parish, provides encouragement and support for parents in the education of their children and families in the formation of their faith.

Partnership between parents, the parish and the school ensures that children are able to engage in a process of life-long learning which begins in early childhood and continues throughout adult life. The relationships and attitudes developed within family, parish and school provide the basis for successful and rewarding experiences for children in their faith journey.

Parents, members of the parish community, Pastor, Principal and teachers in partnership, provide action and a sense of purpose to the school. They ensure that the school remains responsive to its Christian ideals and to the needs of a rapidly changing society. Parents play an active part in the development of the school through the support of their children and through the support of the school's governing body. Parents help ensure that the Catholic school meets the needs of young people in Australian society today.

Catholic schools aim to provide an option for the poor, whether in terms of material poverty or poverty in spiritual growth, or in capacity to learn or in emotional well-being. Parents, through their ongoing financial support and concern for the good and proper management of Catholic schools, assist in ensuring access and equity for all of those who wish to receive a Catholic education for their children.

Parents are supported in ensuring access and equity by members of the parish family, who even though not parents of students at the school, provide financial and moral support for the school's activities.

The School Community Council

Role

The School Community Council provides the opportunity for members of the school, parish and Archdiocesan communities to support the mission of Catholic education in a particular school. Working with the Pastor, Principal and staff, Council members provide leadership to the school community.

The policies of the school are always set within the wider mission of Catholic education. In the areas where it has responsibility for the development and monitoring of policy, the Council operates within the policy and procedures determined by the Catholic Education Commission (CEC) and the Catholic Education Office (CEO).

The Council has responsibility to take decisions in the following areas:

- Supporting the development of the Catholic identity, ethos and mission of the school.
- Supporting pastoral care strategies in the school community.
- Promoting the school in the local community.
- Appointing a member to the school's enrolment committee.
- Developing, approving and monitoring the annual budget, including school determined levies, loan commitments and the fees collection and remission policy.
- Developing and monitoring school enterprises, eg Outside School Hours Care (OSHC), sports associations, hall hire.
- Developing capital and maintenance programs.
- Developing local strategic plans (finances, buildings, resources) and contributing to Archdiocesan educational strategic planning.
- Facilitate local school community debate in response to System leadership by the CEC and the CEO in lobbying governments in school funding campaigns.

- Approving school uniform items decided at school level.
- Ensuring that the parish and school community receives the Annual School Council Report.
- Consulting with the Parents and Friends Association on the expenditure of levies or funds in keeping with Archdiocesan regulations.

The Council has responsibility to provide advice in areas such as:

- Curriculum offerings.
- Educational policies for the school, eg reporting, homework.
- Student welfare policies, eg discipline, sun safe.
- Parent support processes.
- Other matters as requested by the Parish Priest or Principal

Catholic Ethos

The Catholic ethos of the school derives from the motivation for the existence of the Catholic school and its work. To this end, the first responsibility of the School Council is to strive to ensure that the school is truly and distinctly Catholic. In order to do this the Council must consider the values and traditions of Catholic education. Study of Vatican documents such as *'The Catholic School'* and *'The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium'* can assist Council members in understanding these values and traditions. These documents recommend consideration of the Catholic school under the aspect 'Catholic' and of 'school'.

Under the aspect of 'Catholic', Council members need to be aware of what makes a school a 'Catholic' school. The Principal and Parish Priest should guide consideration by the Council of this issue. Ideally the Council, lead by the Principal and Parish Priest, should include this discussion of the issue explicitly on its agenda at least once each school year.

Council members, whose faith tradition is other than Catholic, have an added responsibility to learn about Catholic values and traditions and to bring those aspects to their personal discernment. Council members need to continually strive to develop the Catholicity of the school.

Council members need to develop a pastoral sense which should be modelled on the example of Christ who came to serve others, not to be served. The Council's concern is not just with things, but essentially with people.

The Council should have a special regard for the poor, the disadvantaged, the powerless – modelled on the example of Jesus Christ, who showed such special care for 'the little children' and the disadvantaged.

Under the aspect of 'school', activities of the Council could include:

- A genuine interest in, and support of, the educational programs and practices at work in the school to make it a 'centre of human formation' ('The Catholic School' p 25), in keeping with the mission of Catholic education. The Council may advise the Principal on educational programs and the curriculum.
- Financial policy approval which focuses on effective budgeting and financial planning, the setting of local school levies, the equitable collection of fees and taking out loans using school raised funds in line with Archdiocesan System policy and procedures.
- Properly maintaining and developing buildings and grounds to provide a suitable environment for the learning process to flourish. In NSW, this involves working with the parish to develop maintenance and capital works programs.
- Taking suitable steps to build up support for the school among the community it serves. This will involve the promotion of the school and developing a community spirit through genuine pastoral care of members of the school and community.

The Council is responsible for the evaluation of its policy decisions. The Council should reflect on its own effectiveness in serving the school community.

The Council will have input into the Registration and Renewal Programs and other reviews which are conducted by the CEO

Pastoral Care

Pastoral care is care for people. The School Council's concern should extend to the whole school community: students, parents and staff – and particularly to those organisations closely associated with the school, eg. Council committees.

The Principal and staff need to be affirmed and supported in practical ways as they:

- Live out, day by day, their vocation in the Catholic school.

- Share in the educational mission of the Church by trying to create for the school community an atmosphere enlivened by the Gospel spirit.
- Provide education in the faith.
- Help students to grow to their full development in Christ.

The Council will find ways of expressing to the Principal and staff its pastoral care and concern. Prayer together will be a part of any such program.

The Council should extend its pastoral concern to those individuals and groups who support the school in many varied and practical ways. Such people need to be affirmed in what they are doing, to be thanked, supported and encouraged.

The Council holds a special role in celebrating the achievements of the school community and providing opportunities for the school community to reflect on its journey together.

While the Council assists in the leadership of the school and in helping to set priorities, the Council best serves the school community's interests by adopting a role of collaboration rather than domination.

The Council should try to establish a friendly, working relationship with those people or groups who share the Catholic school ministry.

Promotion

The Catholic school is the basis for a dynamic community. The School Council has responsibility to articulate the values and achievements of the Catholic school and to promote these in the wider community.

The Chair of the Council normally acts as its spokesperson. The Principal and Parish Priest will be consulted on all media releases before they are sent. When speaking through the media, the Council needs to be conscious that while it represents a particular school, it also shares the mission of Catholic education within the Archdiocese. Promotion of one Catholic school should never detract from the respect due to another Catholic school or to the Archdiocesan system of schools. The media should not be used as a vehicle for lobbying between Catholic schools within the Archdiocesan school community.

The School Council has a responsibility to promote the school, and Catholic education in general, to the wider community. The Council has a responsibility to assist the CEC and the CEO in promoting the contribution of Catholic schooling to the public good to those in government by seeking government support and keeping all parties informed of issues related to the funding of Catholic schools.

Enrolment

The CEC has responsibility for developing, monitoring and evaluating an Enrolment Policy for Archdiocesan system schools. The CEC Enrolment Policy includes the Archdiocesan Synod Declaration that no child is to be denied Catholic schooling simply because of the inability to pay. The Principal is responsible for implementing the CEC's Enrolment Policy in the school community.

Finance

The School Council has a vital role in advising the Principal on the short and long term financial planning of the school. The Council oversees the development of the Annual Budget in consultation with the Principal, school staff and parents.

The Council approves and monitors the Annual Budget and endorses the Annual Audited Report of Income and Expenditure.

The Council does not have authority to commit more than its known income.

In line with Archdiocesan System policy and procedures, the Council is responsible for loans entered into by the school community using school raised funds.

The Council is responsible for the setting and collection of local levies and for monitoring the collection of school tuition fees.

The Council should have a clear policy and protocol for fee remissions in line with the Archdiocesan Synod and CEO policies. At all times confidentiality surrounding fee remissions must be maintained.

The Council may request financial assistance from the parish, but must abide by the decision of the parish, reached by the Parish Priest in consultation with the Parish Pastoral Council and Finance Committee

School Enterprises

Many Catholic schools facilitate a range of school enterprises such as Outside School Hours Care, Holiday Care Programs, sporting clubs, uniform shops and canteens. The School Council is responsible for developing policies regarding these initiatives at the local level.

The CEO supports these initiatives through specialised policy and employment services. All school initiatives should be run in adherence to CEO policy and procedures. The Council will delegate the day to day running of these enterprises to a committee of the Council.

The Principal retains the final responsibility for all enterprises run within the school including the management of staff.

Reporting

The School Council should report at least annually to the school and parish community. According to local circumstances this report may take the form of an open meeting or a written document. The report should inform parents and the wider community of the school's achievements, challenges and its aspirations for the future. The report should be sensitive to the confidentiality of Council's discussions.

Individual committees are required to report to every Council meeting. The report is circulated to Council members prior to the Meeting. The Chair will list items for information, discussion and decision on the meeting Agenda.

Strategic Planning

The School Council will support the Principal and staff in ensuring that the school remains a safe, attractive and welcoming place for students, teachers and parents.

The Council, in its strategic planning, will be mindful of the need for ongoing maintenance of the physical plant of the school. It will develop strategies to address these needs according to local circumstances. Funding of capital works undertaken on behalf of the school is primarily the responsibility of the school and its local community. The School Council has a responsibility to be knowledgeable about Archdiocesan System policy and procedures related to applications for supplementary funding. Supplementary capital funding support is available from the Australian Government for eligible capital works and is allocated on a priority needs basis. Supplementary interest subsidy funding on building loans is available for eligible projects from the NSW Government.

The Council will develop a strategy for the addition and replacement of information and communication technology and other expensive teaching equipment.

The School Council, in its strategic planning, will liaise with the Parish Priest, Parish Finance Committee and the CEO to decide when applications for Commonwealth Capital Grants projects should be submitted to the Catholic Block Grant Authority (NSW), as approved by the CEC.

The Council will develop and implement a maintenance program to ensure that the school plant is maintained to a safe and appropriate level.

The Council will seek approval from the CEC for major capital works or changes to school structure or size.

The Council has a responsibility to participate in planning for the future, in conjunction with the CEC which has responsibility for the overall planning of Archdiocesan schools. The Council needs to research carefully and to gather realistic information and take into account the needs of the Archdiocese and the region. It needs to be aware that the school is not an isolated unit but that the school's needs must be related to the needs of other (particularly neighbouring) Catholic schools, and also to the needs of other institutions within the parish and Archdiocese.

Staffing

All employees in Catholic schools are employed by the Director of the CEO under the policies and procedures set out in the CEO Policy and Procedures Manual.

School Council executive members may be invited to serve on selection panels. They provide a parent and Council perspective in the selection process. All material in the selection process is confidential.

The Director delegates to the Principal responsibility for staff. All matters regarding the employment, appraisal and review of staff are the responsibility of the Principal.

Legal Responsibility

Catholic schools in the Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn are covered by the corporate entity, the Trustees of the Catholic Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn. The Archbishop delegates the administration of these schools to the Director of the CEO who further delegates it to the Principal of each school. The insurance carried by the Trustees of the Archdiocese covers staff of the schools and parents and students involved in authorised school activities consistent with the roles and responsibilities set out in these Operational Guidelines and Constitutions.

The Community Council and its fundraising committees in this Archdiocese are covered by the incorporation of the Trustees. The Archbishop has directed that they are not to be separate incorporated bodies. Consequently, the Executive and members of the Community Council have legal protection provided that they do not engage in criminal activity.

Code of Ethics THE COMMUNITY COUNCIL OF ST THOMAS THE APOSTLE SCHOOL KAMBAH WILL:

Acknowledge that schools are a significant expression of the teaching mission of the Catholic Church and function within its structure.

Become more knowledgeable about the mission of Catholic education, as expressed in their school, and sincerely promote it to the various communities with whom they have influence.

Recognise the need for continuing education about their responsibilities and know that they do not officially represent the school's governing body respectively unless explicitly authorised to do so.

Be fully and carefully prepared for each meeting by doing the required readings and completing necessary tasks for committee work and reports.

Be loyal to the governing body's decisions even if personally opposed to the final recommendations and decisions.

Respect the appropriate confidentiality of matters raised at meetings.

Be alert to alternate solutions to problems by keeping an open mind.

Support the Principal in authorised functions and avoid intruding in administrative details unless requested to do so.

Disqualify themselves from discussion and voting on an issue where there is a conflict of interest with the member's family or business interests or if the outcome will grant them any pecuniary or material benefits.

Pray with and for other members of the Council, the School Executive and staff, and the Catholic school community.

Membership of the Community Council

Members of the School Council, whether in a voluntary capacity or as members of staff, contribute through their interest, expertise and commitment to the development of the school as a community of students, staff, Pastor and parents as a centre of human formation in keeping with the mission of Catholic education.

- St Thomas the Apostle School Community Council shall be comprised of the following:
- The Principal is an ex officio member and the Executive Officer of the Council.
- The Parish Priest is an ex officio member. The Parish Priest may nominate an alternate to attend in his place.
- Up to two (2) members of staff elected by the staff.
- At least one (1) and up to four (4) parent members appointed in accordance with the Constitution.
- As many as three (3) other people appointed by the Council for their expertise.
- A representative of the Catholic Education Office (when requested by the school community or the Director of the CEO).
- Depending on local circumstances and with the authorisation of the Catholic Education Commission, a representation larger than any of the above may be permitted.

Criteria for Membership

- The Chairperson of the Council will normally be a Catholic and a committed member of a Catholic parish.
- All Council members should maintain themselves in spiritual growth, motivation, commitment and competence according to the values and traditions of the Catholic Faith.
- An understanding of local Church policies relevant to Archdiocesan Catholic schools.
- A genuine desire to be of service to the school community.
- Having the necessary skills to contribute to the work of the Council.
- The ability to work collaboratively and constructively with other members of the Council.
- Adequate time to give to Council duties.
- Willingness to act within the code of ethics for Council members.

Term of Office

- Only ex officio members may remain as members of the Council for more than six (6) consecutive years.
- A term of membership of the Council shall be for a period of two (2) years for all other Council members.
- Members of the Council may be elected for a maximum of three (3) consecutive terms. Executive members may not hold the same position of Chair, Deputy Chair, Secretary or Treasurer beyond two (2) consecutive terms.

Responsibilities of Community Council Executive Members

The Chair

The Chair of the School Community Council is a significant leader in the school community and holds special responsibility for the mission of education within the Church. For this reason he/she will normally be a Catholic and a committed member of a Catholic parish.

The Chair is elected from within the Council by the executive members of the Council.

The Chair is the key to the success of Council meetings. His/her responsibilities include ensuring that:

- The Council actively develops an atmosphere of prayerful reflection and true Christian discernment.
- The agenda is prepared in collaboration with the Principal who is the Executive Officer of the Council.
- The Council adheres to and promotes Catholic Education ideals and policies.
- Operational Guidelines for School Councils are adhered to, in spirit and in letter, and that the Council functions smoothly and efficiently.
- Good communications are established and maintained between the Council and all individuals and groups interested in the school's welfare, particularly at the local level.
- The meeting is kept moving - by focussing on main issues, by helping discussion, and by maintaining enough formality to allow for full participation without unnecessary discussion.
- All Council members take an active part in discussion, bringing about decisions that are owned.

- Council members respect the opinions and views of others and show, in their deliberations, principles of Christian justice and charity.
- Consensus is always aimed at, even though it may not be achieved in every case. The Chair works to build agreement, helps members see where they disagree and ends discussion when it is not productive.
- No member, including the Chair, regularly dominates the meeting to the exclusion of the opinions and ideas of others. The Chair should seek other opinions and, at times, an expression of opposing views.
- Harmony and mutual trust are promoted within the Council and members are encouraged to respect other opinions and views.
- Problems are recognised and clarified.
- Council members are called on for information and advice, not as substitutes for Council thinking. If the members do not ask the right questions, the Chair does.

The Deputy Chair

The Deputy Chair is elected from within the Council by executive members of the Council. He/she will preside over meetings in the absence of the Chair.

The Principal

As the delegate at the school of the Director of the Catholic Education Office, the Principal is responsible to the Director for the enrolment of students, educational programs and management of the school and its staff.

The Principal as the designated leader of the school community has a particular responsibility to promote the Catholic ethos of the school and Christian values within the community. This responsibility includes providing opportunities for the continuing spiritual formation of Council members, thus ensuring that Catholic values and traditions are central to the Council's processes and actions.

The Principal is the Executive Officer of the School Community Council and prepares the agendas in collaboration with the Chair of the

Council. The Council supports the Principal by providing advice on the educational programs. The Principal facilitates the continuing formation of Council members regarding student needs, educational trends and new policy directions. The Principal ensures that the Council has appropriate information and advice to deliberate on the matters for which it has responsibility.

Where the Principal feels that the Council is making a decision which is inappropriate, the Principal may require the Council to defer the decision until advice is sought from the Director of the CEO.

The Principal is the official avenue of communication between the Council and the school staff.

The Parish Priest

The Parish Priest, or Parish Administrator or Parish Co-ordinator, is an ex officio member of the School Council, or any similar parent group. As the spiritual leader of the faith community, the Parish Priest shares his pastoral vision and offers other spiritual insights that will enrich and improve the quality of the Council's policy making. In this way, Council members are helped to discover their gifts and talents, encouraged in their Christian life and challenged to deepen their faith and to exercise their ministry.

The Parish Priest works closely with the Principal on matters affecting the spiritual, social and moral well-being of the school. The preservation of the Catholic culture of the school is a major concern for them. In the areas of selecting staff, of enrolling children, and of suspending or excluding students, the Principal and Priest need to be in close collaboration.

As Pastor, he sees that the Council carries out faithfully the policies of the Archbishop, whether these are given directly or through the CEC or the policies and procedures of the CEO.

As a member of the Council, the Parish Priest participates in discussions, and accepts the final consensus/majority decision unless he feels that the matter needs to be referred for further advice. In these cases, he may require the Council to defer the decision while advice is sought as appropriate from the Director of the CEO, the Chair of the CEC, the Vicar General, or the Archbishop.

Finally, the Parish Priest exercises an administrative role in that the Parish Priest, as an agent of the Trustees of the Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn, is responsible for the administration of all parish property, which includes the school and its assets. The Parish Priest is to be

consulted on all financial and building matters which have a demonstrable relationship to parish finances.

For further information on the role of the Parish Priest the reader is referred to Section 1.13, 'The Role of the Priest in the Catholic School', CEO Policy and Procedures Manual, Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn, July 2005.

The Secretary

The Secretary is elected from within the Council by the executive members of the Council. The Secretary's responsibilities include:

- Liaising with the Principal and Chair on Council matters.
- Making the necessary preparations for holding meetings, including assisting with the preparation and circulation of agenda and minutes.
- Ensuring that accurate minutes of meetings are taken, properly preserved, and circulated to members at least one week before the following meeting.
- Sharing with other Council members all information relevant to the Council's operation.
- Acting as the pivot for communications to and from the Council, and with those bodies which have a special interest in the school, eg. the Parish Pastoral Council and committees of the Council.
- Ensuring Council members know about all Council communications and that these are always stated to be 'on behalf of the Council'.

School office personnel may provide secretarial services to the Council. In this case the school officer is an officer of the Council and does not have a vote.

The Treasurer

The Treasurer is elected from within the Council by the executive members of the Council. The Treasurer works with the Principal and the Chair of the Council to ensure that the Council is kept fully informed about the areas of its financial responsibility, including:

- Ensuring that fees and building levies are remitted to the CEO.
- Reviewing the fee collection regularly.
- Reviewing the annual budget regularly.
- Liaising with the Principal on the preparation and presentation of the school budget.
- Reporting regularly to the Council on financial matters.
- Facilitating strategic financial planning.

Staff Members

Staff are appointed to the Council because of their expertise, commitment and judgement as a member of staff. While they may be selected by their colleagues, their role on the Council is not a representative one. They offer the Council their skill and wisdom in the best interests of the school and Catholic education. Staff bring to the Council their professional knowledge. They are bound by Council decisions and should at all times maintain the confidentiality of the Council. A staff member, who may also be a parent of a student at the school, is only eligible for election to the Council as a staff member because of the potential for conflict of interest between the staff member's parental role and their staff role. No staff member is eligible to hold the positions of Chair, Deputy Chair or Treasurer on the Council.

Committee Co-Ordinators and Committee Members

Committee members and Co-Ordinators of committees play a vital role in the functioning of an effective Council. While a co-ordinator or their representative is eligible to attend an 'open' section of a Council meeting, they do not hold voting rights because they are not an elected representative of the parent community. When participating in Council discussions and deliberations they must abide by the Code of Ethics adopted by the Council. They are bound by Council decisions and should maintain the confidentiality of the Community Council. If for any reason the Chair declares a meeting or section of a meeting "closed", committee co-ordinators are ineligible to attend by virtue of the fact that they are not elected members of the executive.

Normally, committees would report in writing to each Council meeting. A suggested format is included in the Resources Booklet.

3

(INSERT NAME OF SCHOOL)

School Governance Guidelines

Community Council
Resource Material

INSERT NAME OF SCHOOL HERE

The Catholic School Community Council



Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn
CATHOLIC EDUCATION OFFICE

Insert Crest and name of
school here



CATHOLIC EDUCATION COMMISSION
ARCHDIOCESE OF CANBERRA AND GOULBURN

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Introduction

This Booklet is designed as a resource tool for School Community Councils. The material contained in this tool has been successfully implemented in other Catholic Schools and is in alignment with the requirements as stipulated by the Catholic Education Commission of the Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn. School Community Councils are advised to use this material as a guide to effectively manage the School Community Council. Variation of any of the suggested procedures and processes is permitted providing the adapted version reflects the compliance as required in the School Governance Guidelines Booklet One and the Constitution presented in Booklet Two.

The Catholic Education Office provides direct support for the establishment and development of Community Councils. School Community Councils are encouraged to utilise the CEO in assisting their role in the school.

Prayers for Meetings

All School meetings start with prayer. School communities are encouraged to develop their own specific meeting prayers that reflect the particular charism, context and spirit of their own community.

Included below are some sample prayers and a list of suggested reference materials, which may be useful for meetings.

PRAYER TO THE HOLY SPIRIT

**Be present with us, O Holy Spirit,
for it is in your name
that we are specially gathered together.**

**Come to help us in our affairs, and be
pleased
to enter into our deliberations.**

Instruct us in what we should do.

**Let it be you, first of all,
who inspires our suggestions.**

**May you who love justice let us not offend
against justice or charity.**

Grant also that we may act intelligently.

**Keep us by the gift of your grace
in harmony with your will,
so that we may act as one with you,
who with the Father and the Son live and
reign.**

God for ever and ever.

Amen.

PRAYER FOR GUIDANCE AND WISDOM

**Lord look lovingly
on this group gathered here.**

**During this meeting
as we discuss and deliberate
on issues of importance to this school
help us to be guided by your Spirit.**

**May we be wise in our discernment
balanced in our judgement
fair in our decisions
and visionary in our planning.**

**Though we may, at times,
have differing views
May we listen to one another
and be guided by our common goals.**

**May we always be mindful
in our words and actions
of what is best for all children
in our school.**

We ask this through Christ our Lord

Amen.

CATHOLIC SCHOOLS PRAYER

**Jesus, Good Shepherd,
Teach us through your Spirit
to walk your way of light,
to live your way of truth
and in all things to act with love and
compassion.**

**Help us to come to the Father
by knowing you, loving you
and serving you in each other.**

**May our schools be places of wonder,
learning and peace where the lessons of
today
prepare us for the challenges
of tomorrow.**

**May your Mother, Mary,
guide our footsteps as she guided yours.**

This prayer we make in faith.

Amen.

A PRAYER OF ST IGNATIUS OF LOYOLA

**Teach us good Lord to serve you as you
deserve: to give and not to count the cost;
to fight and not to heed the wounds; to
work and not to seek for rest; to labour and
not to ask for any reward, save that of
knowing that we do your will.
We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.**

A PRAYER OF ST AUGUSTINE

**Lord, you are the light of the minds that
know you, the life of the souls who love you
and the strength of the souls that serve you.
Help us to know you that we may truly love
you, so to love you that we may fully serve
you, whose service is perfect freedom.
Through Christ our Lord Amen**

An Aboriginal Prayer for Strength and Wisdom

O Great Spirit whose voice I hear in the winds,
And whose breath gives life to all the world, hear me.

I am before you, one of your many children.
I am small and weak, I need your strength and wisdom.

Let me walk in beauty,
And let my eyes ever behold the red and purple sunsets.
Make my hands respect the many things you have made,
My ears sharp to hear your voice.

Make me wise so that I may know the things you have taught my people,
The lessons you have hidden under every leaf and rock.

I seek strength, O my Creator,
Not to be superior to my brothers,
But to be able to fight my greatest enemy - myself.

Make me ready to return to you with clean hand and a straight eye,
So that when life fades as the setting sun sets
My spirit may come to you without shame.

SUGGESTED BOOKS FOR MEETING PRAYERS

Gabriele, E.F. ACT JUSTLY, LOVE TENDERLY, WALK HUMBLY, St Mary's Press, Minnesota, 1995.

LIFT UP MY EYES. PSALMS OF GLORY AND HOPE, Eagle Publishing, Guildford, Surrey, 1994.

Maggs, W. PRAYER FOR EVERYDAY USE, St. Paul Publications, Homebush, 1991.

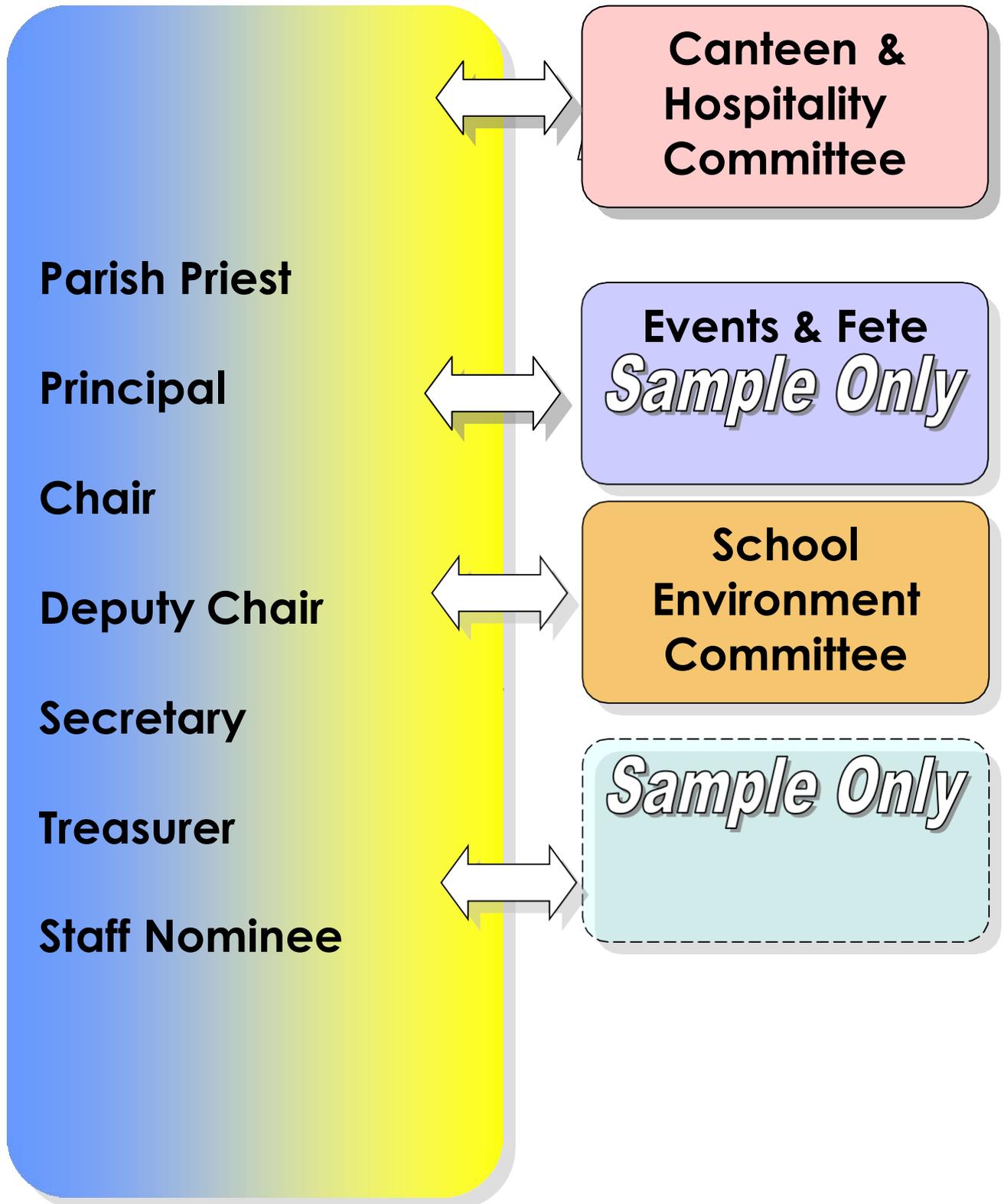
Moody, D.L. STILL WATERS: Spiritual Refreshment for Every Day of the Year, Marshall Pickering, London, 1994.

Podlich, A. AUSTRALIAN IMAGES, Lutheran Publishing House, Adelaide, 1989.

Prewer, B.D. AUSTRALIAN PSALMS, Lutheran Publishing House, Adelaide, 1990.

Ringma, C. DARE TO JOURNEY WITH HENRI NOUWEN, Albatross Books, Sutherland, 1992.

Structure



Election Timeline

Election Process for a Community Council

The following process is suggested for the replacement of a Council member whose term of office has expired.

Should a member whose term of office has expired wish to stand again they must fulfil all requirements of the Constitution and renominate for election.

A candidate for the Council is elected by the community to the Council as an Executive Member. At their first meeting, the Executive will appoint the Chair, Vice Chair, Secretary and Treasurer from the elected Executive. The process for electing executive positions is to be determined following discussion at the first meeting and may include a secret ballot.

Recommended Timetable

Timing	Activity
7 weeks out	Announce vacancy on the Council Distribute the Election Timeline Call for nominations to fill the positions Formal nominations should include a brief biography for publication
4 weeks out	Nominations Close* Announce and distribute nominations (include biography) to community
2 weeks out	Distribute Ballot Papers to the community (eg. two votes per household) Set up Ballot Box in the School Office
Election Day	Election closes at publicised time.
Following the election	Returning Officers count votes Successful and unsuccessful candidates contacted and thanked Principal makes formal announcement to the community.

* Should the number of nominations received equal the number of vacancies received then the Principal may announce that there is no need for an election and declare all the nominees elected to the Executive unopposed.

This timetable is a suggested format. Individual communities may vary the process according to local circumstances as long as the community is informed in writing of the timetable and sufficient time is allocated for each phase of the election process.

Meeting Format

Order	Agenda Item		Facilitator	Time (min)
1	Welcome and Prayer		Rostered	5
2	Introduction		Chairperson	
3		Apologies		1
4		Adoption of Minutes of previous meeting		2
5		Business Arising		5
6		Ordering of the Agenda		2
7		Correspondence		5
8	Matters for Information		Chairperson	
9		Committee Reports	Co-Coordinator	10
10		Finance	Treasurer	5
11		Parish Report	PP or Rep	3
12		Principal Report	Principal	3
13	Matters for Discussion		Chairperson	
14	Matters for Decision		Chairperson	
15	Review Action Decisions		Chairperson	3
16	Preview next meeting's Agenda		Chairperson	3
17	Evaluation of meeting		Chairperson	3

Agenda/Minutes Template

Welcome and Prayer

Introduction

- Apologies
- Adoption of Minutes of previous meeting
- Business Arising
- Ordering of the Agenda
- Correspondence

Matters for Information

- Committee Reports
- Finance
- Parish Priest Report
- Principal Report

Matters for Discussion

Matters for Decision

Review Action Decisions

Preview next meeting's Agenda

Evaluation of meeting

Committee Terms of Reference Template

It is strongly recommended that each committee of a School Community Council be clearly defined in writing. This promotes understanding of who is in the group, what they aim to achieve, and how the committee relates to the Community Council Executive and the school community. Below is a detailed template of what such a committee charter or definition sheet might include. Each Council should customise this format to best match your group's unique needs and tendencies.

Committee Terms of Reference

Name: *(Official name of the committee or working group)*

Members:

- *Name of Co-ordinator*
- *Name of Committee Representatives (listing specific roles/responsibilities)*

Goals:

1. *(primary)*
2. *(secondary)*

Deliverables: *(Specific outputs required/requested from the committee.)*

Scope / Jurisdiction:

(What are the bounds of responsibility and authority of this committee? What do they need to address and what is outside their area of concern? What can they decide on and what needs Council input?)

Guidance from the Board / Lead Group:

(Initial direction and suggestions from the School Community Council.)

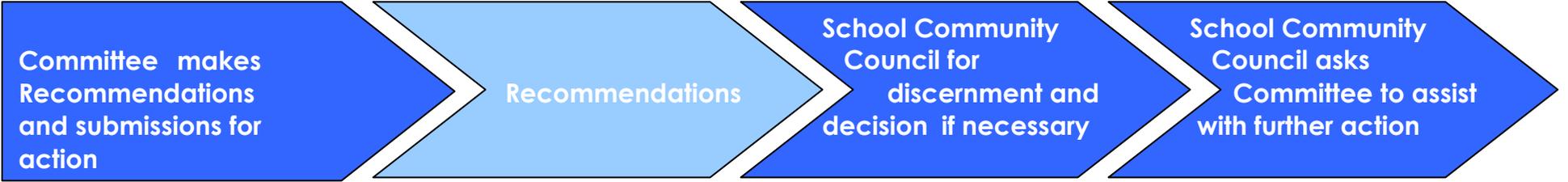
Resources and Budget: *(e.g. equipment, materials, funds available to the committee.)*

Governance and Reporting

(Decision-making technique, e.g. consensus, 2/3 majority vote or chair's authority, etc. Process and frequency of reporting to the Community Council.)

Additional Notes: may include:

- *Relationships to other committees*
- *How communications outside of meetings will be conducted, e.g. phone or email.*
- *Where shared information, such as plans and contact information, will be stored.*
- *History of the committee.*
- *Schedule or meetings and/or other important timelines.*



Committee Decision Making Process

Position	Name	Commenced	Phone Contact	Email
Co-Ordinator				
Member				

Qualities of a Good Chairperson

What are those qualities that make someone a good Chairperson?

Temperament

If a Chairperson is the person who is expected to lead and control meetings which is, essentially, the business of the School Council, then, surely, the personality of Chairperson has an influence on the whole structure and tone of the meeting. If the Chairperson is friendly and affable, then others will follow suit and the general atmosphere will be friendly and co-operative. If, however, the Chairperson is brusque and unapproachable, there will inevitably be cliques, factions and a disunited Council.

A calm and even temperament is a great asset in a Chairperson, as this creates a feeling of stability, whereas if there is too much volatility, the reverse is the case. Such a person is also more likely to remain unperturbed by a challenging meeting or difficult committee, and it is often only the efficiency of the Chairperson that prevents a meeting from being productive and remaining focused.

Guidance

The Chairperson has to be the person who can think clearly and objectively, especially in committee work.

In order to maintain control of the meeting, the Chairperson needs to be aware of all the ramifications of the business on the agenda, and it is the Chairperson's duty to put all sides of the question to the members of the Council and its committees, before a decision is reached. By withholding information, emphasising one point understating another in the initial stage of discussion, or by a biased summing-up, the Chairperson can influence the result – a power that is open to abuse, unless controlled by clear thinking and an open mind.

It is very easy to influence peoples' decisions if one has a knowledge and strong feeling about the matter being discussed. The wise Chairperson will only disclose their personal views if asked and will express the case clearly, leaving the meeting to make its own decision.

Meeting control

If a Chairperson is to carry out his or her role effectively, knowledge of the appropriate procedure for that meeting is essential. The Chair must be available to meet regularly with the Principal to ensure open, clear and consistent communication. Determining a suitable meeting format can generally be assessed by viewing the Agendas and Minutes of previous meetings as well as other publications.

It should be emphasised that, in addition to general procedure, the Chairperson should possess a good knowledge of the function and operation of a Parish Catholic School within the Archdiocese, as published within Policy,

Organisation and Rules.

A meeting will get through a far greater amount of business, waste less time and give more time for effective discussion and decision and sound decisions if correct procedures and information are used as a reference point, so that everyone knows the point of the issue.

Humour and self-control

Perhaps, one of the most difficult things with which the average Chairperson has to contend with is when discussions get 'heated'. Humour can be the Chairperson's best tool when wishing to diffuse rising tempers during a meeting. As has been said, the meeting often takes its tone from that of the Chairperson. Tempers can easily become frayed from all sorts of outside causes, but nothing has a more stabilising effect than a Chairperson who refuses to get rattled by peoples' angst. Obviously, this should not be taken to the extent that, whilst the meeting is 'actively' discussing an item on the Agenda, the Chairperson is happily saying '*Did you hear the one about the dog who walked into the pub*'..., such practice does have a tendency to frustrate other participants and bring discussions to a complete halt.

Personal Discipline

The Chairperson who has a personal sense of responsibility for their role will be a success. Having the personal discipline to assess what the meeting requires of them and preparing for all possible outcomes will benefit the meeting and, ultimately, the outcome of the point being discussed. One of the main factors is actually starting the meeting at the publicised time and setting a finishing time which should be adhered to, whether matters have been fully discussed or not. This provides a rigid structure of which everyone is aware. Committee members get to know that the meeting will start when it should and that they should be there for that time. It also provides a time structure for discussing items on the Agenda. If the Chairperson is seen to be organised, the meeting will be organised, beneficial and productive.

Relationship with the Principal and the Parish Priest

The Council Chair, the Principal and the Parish Priest must develop a mutual relationship of respect and support. Developing a strong partnership built on trust and deference will ensure the best possibility for a harmonious, focussed and highly effective Catholic School community. The Chairperson must have the time to be available to meet with the Principal frequently and at short notice. The planning of Council meetings is the responsibility of the Chair and the Principal who is the Executive Officer of the Council.

Effective Council and Committee Meetings

Tips for productive meetings

1. Don't meet for meeting sake!

Avoid a meeting if the same information could be covered in a memo, e-mail or brief report. One of the keys to having more effective meetings is differentiating between the need for one-way information dissemination and two-way information sharing. To disseminate information you can use a variety of other communication media, such as sending an e-mail or posting the information on the school website. If you want to be certain you have delivered the right message, you can schedule a meeting to simply answer questions about the information you have sent. By remembering to ask yourself, "Is a meeting the best way to handle this?" you'll cut down on wasted meeting time and restore your group's belief that the meetings they attend are necessary.

2. Set Objectives for the Meeting

Set objectives before the meeting! Before planning the agenda for the meeting, write down a phrase or several phrases to complete the sentence: *By the end of the meeting, I want the group to...* Depending on the focus of your meeting, your ending to the sentence might include phrases such as: *...be able to list the top three new ideas for engaging the parent community, ...have generated three ideas for increasing exposure in the media, ...understand the plan for developing facilities, ...leave with an action plan, ...decide on a new ICT supplier, or ...approve the new school logo.*

One benefit of setting objectives for the meeting is to help you plan the meeting. The more concrete your meeting objectives, the more focused your agenda will be. A second important benefit of having specific objectives for each meeting is that you have a concrete measure against which you can evaluate that meeting. Were you successful in meeting the objectives? Why or why not? Is another meeting required? Setting meeting objectives allows you to continuously improve your effective meeting process.

3 Don't Set Yourself Up As The Complaints Department

Dealing with complaints and problems is an important facet of any public institution. It is important to set up channels for this to be handled on an ad hoc basis by members of the Council. It is important to listen to other parents in the community and to respond. However, you need to be careful that you are not used as a go-between for every issue and complaint, people will gladly give you their problem and pretty soon you have a full-time job listening to complaints. It is amazing how the intensity of a complaint eases when people are advised to put it in writing and suggest a possible solution.

4. Provide an Agenda, Reports and Background Papers Beforehand

In accepting their position, Council members undertake to prepare for each meeting. In order for them to prepare effectively, they must be provided with an Agenda, all Committee Reports and any background papers well before the meeting starts. Tabling papers at a meeting should be a rare occurrence. The Agenda needs to include a brief description of the meeting objectives, a list of the topics to be covered and a list stating who will address each topic and for how long. When you send the agenda, you should include the time, date and location of the meeting and any background information participants will need to know to hold an informed discussion on the meeting topic. The most important thing you should do with your agenda is to follow it closely!

5. Assign Meeting Preparation

Give all participants something to prepare for the meeting, and that meeting will take on a new significance to each group member. For problem-solving meetings, have the group read the background information necessary to get down to business in the meeting. Ask each group member to think of one possible solution to the problem to get everyone thinking about the meeting topic. Using the format of Items for Information, Items for Discussion and Items for Decision will allow you to identify what topics need to be prepared well.

6. Assign Action to Items

Don't finish any discussion in the meeting without deciding how to act on it. Listen for key comments that flag potential action items and don't let them pass by without addressing them during your meeting. Statements such as *We should really...*, *that's a topic for a different meeting...*, or *I wonder if we could...* are examples of comments that should trigger action items to get a task done, hold another meeting or further examine a particular idea. Assigning tasks and projects as they arise during the meeting means that your follow-through will be complete. Addressing off-topic statements during the meeting in this way also allows you to keep the meeting on track. By immediately addressing these statements with the suggestion of making an action item to examine the issue outside of the current meeting, you show meeting participants that you value their input as well as their time.

7. Examine Your Meeting Process

Assign the last few minutes of every meeting as time to review the following questions: What worked well in this meeting? What can we do to improve our next meeting? Reviewing processes will enhance the effectiveness, operation and function of the Community Council.

8. Don't Get Caught Up In The Little Things

The main role of a Council is to look to the Big Picture. What is this Catholic school trying to achieve? What are we working towards in the future? Are we putting everything in place to create an effective Catholic School?

The Principal's role is to manage and administer the school and to take advice from the Council.

The 5 Whys Tool for Problem Solving

Quickly Getting to the Root of a Problem

Why use this tool?

The **5 Whys** is a simple problem-solving technique that helps users to get to the root of the problem quickly. The **5 Whys** strategy involves looking at any problem and asking: "Why?" and "What caused this problem?"

Very often, the answer to the first "why" will prompt another "why" and the answer to the second "why" will prompt another and so on; hence the name the 5 Whys strategy.

Benefits of the **5 Whys** include:

- It helps to quickly determine the root cause of a problem
- It is easy to learn and apply

How to use the tool:

When looking to solve a problem, start at the end result and work backward (toward the root cause), continually asking: "Why?" This will need to be repeated over and over until the root cause of the problem becomes apparent.

Example:

Following is an example of the **5 Whys** analysis as an effective problem-solving technique:

1. Why are the parents unhappy with the changes to the reading program?
Because there is inconsistency in the delivery of the program.
2. Why is there inconsistency in the delivery of the program? The changes were too big too soon.
3. Why was the task too big? Because we underestimated the complexity of the job.
4. Why did we underestimate the complexity of the job? Because we made a quick estimate of the time and budget needed to implement the task and did not list the individual stages needed to complete the project.
5. Why didn't we do this? Because we are implementing too many projects at the same time. We clearly need to review our strategic plan with realistic timelines and resources.

Remember

The 5 Whys strategy is an easy and often-effective tool for uncovering the root of a problem. Because it is so elementary in nature, it can be adapted quickly and applied to most any problem. Bear in mind, however, that if it doesn't prompt an intuitive answer, other problem-solving techniques may need to be applied.

Active Listening

Hearing What People Are Really Saying

Listening is one of the most important skills you can have. How well you listen has a major impact on your job effectiveness, and on the quality of your relationships with others.

We listen to obtain information.

We listen to understand.

We listen for enjoyment.

We listen to learn.

Given all this listening we do, you would think we'd be good at it!

In fact most of us are not.

Becoming an Active Listener

There are five key elements of active listening. They all help you ensure that you hear the other person, and that the other person knows you are hearing what they say.

1. Pay attention.

Give the speaker your undivided attention, and acknowledge the message. Recognize that non-verbal communication also "speaks" loudly.

- Look at the speaker directly.
- Put aside distracting thoughts. Don't mentally prepare a rebuttal!
- Avoid being distracted by environmental factors.
- "Listen" to the speaker's body language.
- Refrain from side conversations when listening in a group setting.

2. Show that you are listening.

Use your own body language and gestures to convey your attention.

- Nod occasionally.
- Smile and use other facial expressions.
- Note your posture and make sure it is open and inviting.
- Encourage the speaker to continue with small verbal comments like yes, and uh huh.

3. Provide feedback.

Our personal filters, assumptions, judgments, and beliefs can distort what we hear. As a listener, your role is to understand what is being said. This may require you to reflect what is being said and ask questions.

- Reflect what has been said by paraphrasing. "What I'm hearing is..." and "Sounds like you are saying..." are great ways to reflect back.
- Ask questions to clarify certain points. "What do you mean when you say..." "Is this what you mean?"
- Summarize the speaker's comments periodically.

4. Defer judgment.

Interrupting is a waste of time. It frustrates the speaker and limits full understanding of the message.

- Allow the speaker to finish.
- Don't interrupt with counter arguments.

5. Respond Appropriately.

Active listening is a model for respect and understanding. You are gaining information and perspective. You add nothing by attacking the speaker or otherwise putting him or her down.

- Be candid, open, and honest in your response.
- Assert your opinions respectfully.
- Treat the other person as he or she would want to be treated.

It takes a lot of concentration and determination to be an active listener. Old habits are hard to break, and if your listening habits are as bad as many people's are, then there's a lot of habit-breaking to do!

Be deliberate with your listening and remind yourself frequently that your goal is to truly hear what the other person is saying. Set aside all other thoughts and behaviours and concentrate on the message. Ask questions, reflect, and paraphrase to ensure you understand the message. If you don't, then you'll find that what someone says to you and what you hear can be amazingly different!

