

## Life to the full: The mission and purpose of Catholic schools in Australia

Catholic schools serve communities with a range of backgrounds, cultures and faith commitment and experience. To this end, those who are responsible for the leadership of Catholic schools are invited to consider how faith communities can be inclusive for all, and how they nurture hope filled communities of faith.

The set of questions in this document are designed for use in staff reflection and professional development, school review, strategic planning and community engagement to examine key elements of Catholic school mission and identity.

Questions have been written for each key section of “Life to Full” and can be used as reflection questions, prayer focus and online material to encourage conversations around the foundation and purpose of Catholic education today.

The sections and questions could be used individually to enable a thorough consideration of the document. This might be as a series of staff meeting focus areas or they could be packaged to be presented as a whole day reflection.

### The vision of the Catholic school (p.5)

“Every Catholic school exists to propose to their students the religious and moral beliefs underlying a life-giving Catholic vision” (p. 5).

**Q.** How does your school share a life-giving Catholic vision with students, staff and the wider community?

“Catholic schools form individuals to flourish and live good lives, and to contribute to building a just and healthy society” (p. 5).

**Q.** How does your school community promote the importance of individuals contributing to the building of a just and healthy society?

“Catholic schools are “called upon to offer an educational service appropriate to the present times” (p. 5)

**Q.** What are the educational challenges and blessings for your school community at this time?

“They are communities of welcome, forgiveness, equality, inclusion and encouragement” (p. 5)



Artwork: 'Transience' by Lorraine Chow, St Monica's College, Epping.

**Q.** How has your school created a community of welcome, forgiveness, equality, inclusion and encouragement?

“The mission of Catholic schools is centred around the integration of faith, learning, life and culture” (p. 5).

**Q.** How does your school intentionally integrate faith, learning, life and culture?

“Catholic schools work in partnership with parents and parishes...” (p. 5).

**Q.** What practical ways does your school implement for productive partnerships with parents and parishes?

### Context

#### EDUCATIONAL (p.6)

**Q.** Who are the students and families that make up your school community?

**Q.** How do the diverse groups within your school community impact the way in which you share the faith story of your Catholic school community?

Q. Who are the staff that make up your school community?

Q. How does the diverse nature of staff impact the provision of faith formation and professional development in your school community?

## IN RELATIONSHIP TO CHURCH COMMUNITY (p. 7)

Q. What is the role of Catholic education in the Church today?

Q. How do Catholic schools work with parish communities to be a face of the Church that is welcoming, witnessing and hope filled?

Q. How do Catholic schools today serve God's mission through education?

## Relationship with God & Jesus our Hope - God with us (p. 8)

Q. How does the Catholic school bring young people, staff and families, into relationship with God and to an understanding of the person of Jesus as central to the Christian story?

Q. What opportunities can schools provide for students, staff and families to celebrate through regular prayer and liturgy?

## What is mission? (p. 9)

Q. What are the tangible ways your school lives out its mission as part of the wider mission of the Church in education?

“A charism is a lens in which to view the Gospel, in the hope that we will be inspired and compelled to live this call to discipleship.”<sup>1</sup>

Q. If your school has a charism, what are the challenges and blessings of having charism as a lens for Gospel reflection and action?

Q. Which of the descriptions of mission on page nine, match your understanding of mission in Catholic education today?

<sup>1</sup> Brien & Hack. (2005). *Charism in the Catholic School: A Workable Twenty-First Century Model*, p. 70). Retrieved from: <https://dominicandeducationaustralia.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Brien-Hack-Charism-in-the-Catholic-School-A-Workable-Twenty-First-Century-Model.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> *Congregation for Catholic Education. (2022). The Identity of the Catholic School for a Culture of Dialogue*, n. 28.

<sup>3</sup> Pope Francis. (2023). *World Day of Prayer*.

## Openness to a culture of dialogue (p. 10)

Q. What are the key social and cultural issues facing your school community today?

Q. What does a culture of dialogue mean for your community?

Q. How can your school community build a culture of dialogue to respond to changing social and cultural contexts?

Q. In what can your school community improve and nurture your practice of *Dadirri*, deep listening to the signs of the times and the concerns of the community?

## Nurtured by witness (p. 11)

“The Christian presence must be shown and made clear... it must be visible, tangible and conscious.”<sup>2</sup>

Q. How is your school a tangible and visible Christian presence in your community?

Q. How can your staff be encouraged or inspired to take an active part in a culture of Christian witness, irregardless of their own faith background?

Q. In your school community who are the witnesses?

## More than a job (p. 12)

“Vocation is that nourishing sense that we are meant to be doing what we are doing” (p. 9)

Q. How do you encourage your staff and colleagues to see their role as vocation - more than a job?

“God's call to love is an experience that does not allow us to remain silent.”<sup>3</sup>

Q. When is your school community called to action and solidarity for God's mission?

Q. How can school leadership as a vocation of hope and compassion, change cultures?

## Final questions

Q. What does it mean to support the vision and mission of a Catholic school community?

Q. How can your school be a herald of hope, inclusion, hospitality in your community?