



**SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT FRAMEWORK**



Catholic Education Ballarat

# School Improvement Handbook

Updated May 2021

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## OUR CATHOLIC SCHOOL CONTEXT

*At the heart of Catholic education there is always Jesus Christ: everything that happens in Catholic schools should lead to an encounter with the living Christ (Educating Today and Tomorrow: A Renewing Passion Instrumentum Laboris 2014).*

Catholic education in the Diocese of Ballarat occurs in interwoven communities of learners gathered in Jesus's name. It has its foundation in communities of believers who have made their education system a place of welcome to reach out to nurture all God's people. Generations of diocesan clergy, religious congregations and lay people have endeavoured to establish the flourishing educational communities that exist today with each school an expression of our foundational belief that we are all created in the image and likeness of a loving God.

*Catholic schools are inspired by a distinctive vision and seek to live out a distinctive mission. Although Catholic schools may differ in many ways, they all seek to be religious schools in the Catholic tradition. A Catholic educational style .... articulates and celebrates the bonds of connectedness within all reality, human, non-human and divine, and engages students and adults in that network of relationships. It also seeks to develop in learners the cognitive, affective and spiritual skills needed to experience and interpret their lives as a personal journey of meaning-making and growth toward truth and wholeness, in the light of the Judeo-Christian worldview. (Awakenings, 2018. Ch 1, p 6).*

Catholic schools are places of learning and growth for all within the school community. Catholic schools are committed to providing an outstanding education in both religion and general education, for all students enrolled in Catholic Schools. According to *The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium* (1999), "The constant aim of the school therefore, should be contact and dialogue with the pupils' families" (n 20). While each Catholic school is unique to its context, each Catholic school must ensure that there is:

- respect for the dignity and uniqueness of all in the school community
- curriculum and pedagogy that allows students to grow and develop their abilities and talents in an climate of cooperation and solidarity
- attention to a balanced focus on cognitive, affective, social, professional, ethical and spiritual aspects
- promotion of research as a rigorous commitment towards truth, being aware that human knowledge has its limits, but also with a great openness of mind and heart
- respect of ideas, openness to dialogue, the ability to interact and work together in a spirit of freedom and care

*(adapted from Educating Today and Tomorrow: A Renewing Passion Instrumentum Laboris 2014).*

*Catholic education finds its place within a specific time in a person's history, and is all the more effective if it is able to connect to this history, build alliances, share responsibilities and build educating communities (Educating Today and Tomorrow: A Renewing Passion Instrumentum Laboris 2014).*

Parents, as the first educators of their children, enter into a partnership with the school to promote and support their child's education. Families bring to the school their own distinctive contribution to the learning environment.

*We need to welcome other voices in our midst with humility and respect, looking for new ways to serve them, inspired by the Word of the Gospel. In order to meet people, we must first allow them to come near us (Pollefeyt & Bouwens, 2014, p.306).*

All Catholic schools in the Diocese of Ballarat, operate under the provisions of Canon Law and a mandate from the Bishop of Ballarat to provide Catholic education according to the precepts, teaching and practices of the Catholic Church. According to Awakenings (2018), “The bishop is responsible for ensuring that the mission and tradition of the Church is expressed faithfully by all Catholic organizations in his diocese, including schools” (Ch 2, p 6).

Catholic education exists in the context of the Church speaking of its authority to inform and call to excellence all who participate in Catholic education. It is stated in the Church document *The Teaching Function of the Church*: ‘The diocesan bishop has the right to watch over and inspect the Catholic schools situated in his territory, even those established or directed by religious institutes. He also has the right to issue directives concerning the general regulation of Catholic schools (Can. 806.1). It is further stated “Those who are in charge of Catholic schools are to ensure, under the supervision of the local ordinary, that the formation given in them is, in its academic standards, at least as outstanding as that in other schools in the area” (Can. 806.2).

Consistent with *Catholic Social Teaching*, Catholic schools must also meet government requirements for the continuing registration of the school. These requirements are set out in the *Guide to the Minimum Standards and Other Requirements for School Registration* (Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority).

## **Diocesan Education Vision and Mission**

### ***Vision***

*As partners in Catholic education and open to God’s presence, we pursue fullness of life for all.*

### ***Mission***

- *Proclaiming and witnessing to the Good News of Jesus Christ*
- *Ensuring quality learning that promotes excellence and fosters the authentic human development of all*
- *Living justly in the world, in relationship with each other and in harmony with God’s creation*
- *Exploring, deepening and expressing our Catholic identity in diverse ways*
- *Enabling each one of us to reflect more fully the image of God*

## SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

*Nowadays, a lot of attention has been devoted to verifying the outcome of students' learning activities. International surveys draw up rankings and compare countries. Public opinion is very sensitive to these messages. Transparent results, social reporting, the drive towards improving existing standards: they all point to the current trend to improve the quality of education. However, it is important not to lose sight of one of education's fundamental aspects, which is respecting each person's readiness to adjust and the awareness that real changes usually take a long time to happen. Education, right now, is like the metaphor of the Good Sower who is busy sowing without always having the possibility to see the fruits of his work. Educating requires working with hope and confidence. Education and teaching must be concerned with constant self-improvement and verifying the effectiveness of its tools, being aware that not all expected results can always be seen or ascertained (Educating Today and Tomorrow: A Renewing Passion Instrumentum laboris 2014).*

Quality education in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is an important endeavour and enterprise for not only schools and education systems but for governments and the wider global community. It is globally acknowledged that "education is both the key driver of economic growth and a key social equaliser" (Ischinger, 2011, as cited in Bruniges, 2012, p.9). The challenge is not only having access to education, but "to improve the quality of their education for the duration of their schooling" (Bruniges, 2010, p. 13)

School Improvement is a continuous process for planned educational change that improves the spiritual, educational, social and emotional outcomes of all students. It involves a systematic, sustained and evidence-based approach which is regularly monitored through effective leadership that leads teachers in improving professional learning and practice (McMasters, 2012). Successful school improvement involves:

- belief that schools and students can improve;
- leadership that constantly drives school improvement, builds effective organisational culture that takes responsibility for all students learning and growth;
- building teacher capacity through engagement in ongoing professional learning and development;
- implementation of effective change processes through implementing evidence-based strategies for professional decision-making;
- planning and management of improvement within a timeframe with high expectations and goals for what is to be achieved;
- regular monitoring of data and feedback on student progress;
- effective stewardship to support the strategies required to improve student outcomes;
- engagement all staff, parent and wider community in the processes of school improvement;
- collaboration of all schools and Catholic Education Ballarat in the vision and strategies to enhance school improvement across the system.

*(Bruniges, 2012; Hattie, 2012; Henderson, 2007; Jensen, 2011; McMasters, 2012)*

## School Improvement Research

Across Australia, education systems and jurisdictions in states and territories have, over many years, developed and implemented policies, processes and procedures related to school improvement and accountability. Whilst local circumstances have led to variations in the design and implementation of, and support for, school improvement frameworks, there is common agreement that the “ultimate objective of school improvement is to improve educational outcomes for students, including achievement and wellbeing.” (National School Improvement Tool, 2002). More recently, developmental work has been undertaken in all states and territories in relation to teacher performance and development.

The adoption by State, Territory and Commonwealth Ministers of the *Australian Teacher Performance and Development Framework* (2012) has been a catalyst for further work in education jurisdictions around the nation and education systems are in the process of developing policies and guidelines for implementation. The key link between school improvement and performance and development frameworks is the strong commitment to the improvement of educational outcomes for all students. This commitment is further shown in the adoption and publication of the *National Professional Standard for Principals* (2011) and the *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers* (2011). Both documents were developed on the basis of research related to effective school leadership and quality teaching practices. Nation-wide consultation ultimately led to endorsement by State, Territory and Commonwealth Ministers.

In essence, there is now a wealth of knowledge about school and teacher effectiveness and the ways in which school improvement processes can be successfully and effectively embedded routinely into a school’s culture and identity. The work of researchers such as Hattie (2012), Dinham (2008) and Darling-Hammond (2010) has influenced schools’ thinking and practices related to pedagogy and the ways students learn.

## Common Elements of Systemic Approaches To School Improvement

The importance of high-quality school leadership consistently underpins approaches to school improvement in state and territory jurisdictions and sectors in Australia and in countries such as the United States of America, United Kingdom and New Zealand. Increasing attention to school autonomy with its associated responsibilities and accountabilities clearly identify the school as the locus for improvement. Systems increasingly are refining the levels of support provided to schools to enable them to exercise their autonomy within systemic policies and guidelines outlining mutual accountabilities and responsibilities. Within this construct and taking into account school improvement research findings, it is possible to identify common elements of systemic approaches to school improvement:

- development of school leaders’ knowledge and understanding of school improvement processes and procedures in the context of system requirements (in the Catholic sector this includes Catholic faith and identity dimensions)
- rigorous and planned evidence-based processes of self-assessment/reflection using quantitative and qualitative data, led by the principal and school leadership team and involving all staff
- formal review processes using external reviewers who are trained for this purpose leading to reports containing recommendations for improvement
- development of a strategic school improvement plan for the next period
- annual action/implementation plans to indicate how improvement priorities will be met
- annual reports to the school community

## School Reflection

*School self-evaluation is the cornerstone of school improvement. It is when schools are able to determine for themselves, on an ongoing basis, what is working and what needs to be changed that improvement is stronger (McIntyre, 2011, p.12).*

A key focus for school improvement is rigorous school reflection that occurs continually and is reviewed externally at the end of a school improvement cycle. MacBeath (2005) states that “self-evaluation is a process of reflection on practice, made systematic and transparent, with the aim of improving pupil, professional and organisational learning” (p. 4). School reflection is a systematic process in which schools reflect on their strengths and identify areas for further improvement. School reflection places greater emphasis on the school monitoring data and making decisions about the next steps to improvement. As school leaders and teachers are the key change agents for improvement, school reflection on student outcomes is a crucial element of school improvement.

Effective school reflection enables schools to:

- monitor and evaluate progress according to goals, outcomes and timelines
- initiate and lead change in improving the outcomes for students
- affirm strengths and build on what is working well
- identify areas of improvement and develop strategies to bring about improvements in those areas
- identify whole school and individual professional learning against the School Improvement Plan
- report to the school community on progress and priorities for improvement and development
- develop partnerships with families, parish, schools, wider community and education system as a collaborative endeavour in engagement in student learning

*(Chapman & Sammons, 2013)*

Success of the school reflection process is dependent on school leadership which also impacts on quality teaching and effective systemic partnership.

### **School Leadership**

*I know of no improving school that doesn't have a principal who is good at leading improvement (Fullan, 2001, p.141).*

Research findings in Australia and overseas in the areas of school leadership, teaching and learning have influenced greatly the continuing work of evaluating and refining school improvement frameworks and approaches to teacher performance and development. Increased attention is being given to the primacy of the principal and school leaders in leading and managing school improvement, and teacher performance and development processes.

The work of prominent educators and researchers such as Leithwood (2004), Fullan (2001, 2008, 2009), Robinson (2006, 2007), Hopkins et al (2005) and Davies (2006, 2008) identified the importance of a strategic and planned approach to school improvement led by principals with the capacity and capabilities for leading and managing change and the establishment of an effective improvement culture in the school related to school performance and teacher performance and development.

*The school must begin from the principle that its educational program is intentionally directed to the growth of the whole person (The Catholic School, n.2).*

Principals working closely and collaboratively with other school leaders and staff create the climate for improving teaching and learning practices and professional learning. Within that climate is also acknowledging and enhancing the role of families, parish, and wider community partnership in student learning (Butler, 2010; Otero, 2001).

Zbar et al (2009) in their paper *Schools that achieve extraordinary success: how some disadvantaged Victorian schools “punch above their weight”*<sup>1</sup> make the point that the pre-eminent condition for school improvement is strong, shared leadership with a clear vision and direction for the school.

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<sup>1</sup> This paper outlines four preconditions for successful school improvement, namely, strong leadership with a clear vision and direction for the school; high expectations for students and staff; an orderly and supportive learning environment where all students are well known; a focus on what matters most.

In the Diocese of Ballarat, the role of leadership in Catholic education exemplifies the Diocesan Education Vision and it's imperative that *“as partners in Catholic education and open to God’s presence, we pursue fullness of life for all.”* To this end leaders act from the totality of who they are and within the Catholic education context this incorporates their faith, values and witness. The five sets of capabilities outlined in the *Diocesan Leadership Framework (2017)* reflect the totality of who leaders are and invite reflection and imagining that promotes openness, growth and fullness of life.

- Witness Capabilities
- Personal Capabilities
- Relational Capabilities
- Professional Capabilities
- Organisational Capabilities



See also: *Diocesan Leadership Framework (2017)*  
*National Professional Standard for Principals (AITSL, 2011)*

Effective leaders *“...adopt a ‘no excuses’ policy and drive a strong and explicit agenda to improve the quality of teaching and learning throughout the school’* (McMasters (2012, p. 3). Effective leaders also lead staff through an ongoing reflection process in school improvement and constantly ask the following questions:

- Are all our students progressing well?
- What information are we using to assess this progress?
- What actions should we take to address what our evidence and data reveal?
- What do we need to learn in order to improve student achievement?
- Where can we learn this?

*(McIntyre, 2011)*

## Quality Teaching

*The leader strives for purity of heart: motivated first to serve, totally devoted to the mission, the leader steps down to serve and follower steps up to lead (Ebener, 2012, P.vii).*

Quality teaching is an important factor in providing equitable outcomes for all students. Hattie (2003) indicates that what *“teachers know, do, and care about”* is a significant factor in student outcomes. Jensen (2011) states that *“students with a highly effective teacher learn twice as much as students with a less effective teacher”* (p,6). Central to improving teacher quality are the strategies that school leaders put in place to continually build teacher capacity. Effective leaders *“build a collective ethic of responsibility for leadership in schools”* (Duignan, 2012 p.117). Underpinning school improvement is the implementation of an effective performance and development culture. This includes:

- creating a learning environment that is collaborative and reflects on data and professional practice
- implementing curriculum design that is clear in its purpose and learning outcomes, sequential and appropriate content and has effective learning and teaching and assessment strategies
- integration of feedback that includes peer, student and parent into the process of learning
- effective induction processes for new staff, new to role and continuous clarification for all staff on policy and directions
- building a culture of shared responsibility and continuous improvement

*(McIntyre 2011, AITSL 2011, Jensen 2011, CEOB, 2015)*

It is in this environment that teachers are able to set goals for their learning and practice, reflect on their performance against standards in a culture that *pursues fullness of life for all* (Ballarat Diocesan Vision).

See also: *National Professional Standards for Teachers* (AITSL, 2011)  
*Australian Teacher Performance and Development Framework* (AITSL, 2012)



## Systemic Partnerships

*What we seek for one child must be that which we seek for all children (McIntyre, 2011)*

Education systems play an equally important role as schools in school improvement in that:

Improvement in systems practices and processes depend on the belief that, no matter how well a school system is performing, it can always do a better job of supporting and promoting quality teaching and learning. High performing systems passionately adopt this to their main challenge (McMasters. 2012, p.5).

Education systems require a partnership with schools that is mutually beneficial so that there is dialogue and feedback from schools on the effectiveness of their improvement strategies (McMasters, 2012). Research (McIntyre, 2011) indicates that school systems that have in place effective policy and practice also significantly contribute to improved outcomes to students.

Systems need to:

- value the knowledge within schools and engage with schools in continuous dialogue and inquiry
- promote sharing of evidence based strategies that impact on student learning
- engage schools in continuous improvement that improves capability and in turn accountability
- build teacher capacity that is focused on performance development
- engage teachers in early in their career in leadership pathways
- have clear policies that are aligned to evidence–based practice for school improvement and allows for differentiation at the local context
- encourage a balance between systemic summative and school-based formative assessment. This recognises the value of school formative assessment that provides feedback on teacher performance. System professional learning assist teacher understanding of the formative assessment as a key strategy in feedback on teaching practice
- develop strong purpose for collaboration and cooperation in improving student outcomes across the system
- promote excellence and equity for all students
- value the teaching profession and its role in school improvement

*(McIntyre, 2011)*

While systems have a role in monitoring systemic and government requirements, systemic improvement works best within an environment where there is a genuine partnership between schools and the system for improving student outcomes. School leadership not only builds staff responsibility for improving outcomes for all students within their school but for all students within their system. Effective systemic partnership includes educational leaders (school and system):

- having shared responsibility for the system and school vision and directions
- continue to improve the quality and equity of student outcomes
- develop skills in evidence–based decision making
- improving data literacy and professional knowledge and practice
- sharing data across schools and the system
- providing feedback on system and school strategies
- collaborating and cooperating rather than competing

*(Bruniges, 2012, McIntyre, 2011, McMasters, 2012)*

See also *DOBCEL School Improvement Policy, 2020*

*Remember that the main goal is to use all resources, including those outside of the school, to build the professional capital of teachers so that student learning can flourish (Fullan, 2014, p.97).*

## OVERVIEW OF SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

In the context of Catholic schools in the Diocese of Ballarat, the Bishop of Ballarat has oversight of Catholic education. The designated school governing authority exercises ultimate responsibility for all school operations such as school improvement, employment of staff and accountability. The governing authority delegates the responsibility to the principal to ensure that the school is meeting diocesan and government accountability. The principal is responsible for communicating to the governing authority regarding progress and concerns on all operations of the school. This delegation is a co-operative arrangement between the governing authority and the school.

The Bishop of Ballarat delegates the responsibility to the Director of Catholic Education to provide effective leadership and service to schools that enables schools to meet diocesan and government accountability. The Executive Director of Catholic Education Ballarat is responsible for communicating to the Bishop progress and concerns regarding diocesan and government accountability. This delegation is a co-operative arrangement between the Bishop and the Executive Director.

### **The purpose of School Improvement**

School improvement is a process for improving student outcomes in learning and wellbeing and takes into account school culture, leadership, learning and growth of all within the school community.

It provides a structure over a five-year cycle to focus on what is important for school improvement within the context of the school. School improvement builds a culture of shared responsibility for improving the outcomes for all students. Quality teaching has a significant impact on students and their learning (Hattie 2012). School Improvement promotes evidence-based strategies and innovation and encourages schools to continually ask important questions about student learning and future directions that will:

- maximise student outcomes including intellectual, spiritual and ethical competence
- provide effective learning and teaching
- enhance pastoral care and wellbeing of the school community

The continuous cycle of reflection and review of priorities, goals and strategies assists schools to:

- build shared understanding of the school vision
- identify strengths, future growth and change management strategies
- develop a collective ethic of responsibility for leadership in improving student outcomes
- ensure that students are developing appropriate knowledge, skills and capabilities that allow them to develop as fully integrated individuals that leads to an encounter with the living Christ
- promote professional learning so that all staff continue to build professional capacity
- monitor curriculum implementation so that it is sequential and draws on the local context as well as external requirements
- review data regularly so that improvement strategies are linked to changing student requirements
- implement effective intervention approaches within the classroom and specialized assistance where required
- dialogue and engage the school, parish and wider community in partnerships on matters related to student learning

See *DOBCEL School Improvement Policy, 2020*

See *School Improvement and Accountability Schedule*

## The School Improvement Framework

The School Improvement Framework supports the elements of the *Diocesan Education Vision* through:

- Partnership between families, schools, parishes, the Catholic Education Office and communities
- Processes and dialogue that allow school communities to be open to God’s presence and celebrate each day the joy of the Gospel that “Jesus Christ loves you; he gave his life to save you; and now he is living at your side every day to enlighten, strengthen and free you” (Evangelii Gaudium#16-4)
- Enhancing the fullness of life as each member of our community continues to grow as a person loved and graced by God

## Catholic School Vision

Central to the School Improvement Framework is the school vision. Within this context, a Catholic School Vision (Vision) is defined as a clear educationally focused statement providing a compelling image of what the school can be and aspires to become in the future. It should:

- reflect and express the distinctive nature of the Catholic school in the public forum
- focus the entire school's life and programs according to the Church's stated values
- inspire and unify the commitment of all involved in the Catholic school community

The Vision is supported by the school’s Mission and Contextual Statements.

## Key Aspects of Schooling

School Improvement acknowledges the connectedness of the five Key Aspects of Catholic Schooling as interdependent aspects of the school vision. They provide the framework for reflection, review, planning and accountability. The extent to which students are able to achieve their potential in terms of learning outcomes is partly dependent upon the capacity of the school to provide best possible learning environments across these key aspects of schooling.



## Characteristics of A Highly Effective Catholic School (CHECS)

The five Key Aspects of Catholic Schooling and their associated components are clearly articulated and expanded upon in the *Characteristics Of A Highly Effective Catholic School* document (2018). CHECS provides a core point of reference for all school improvement activity. The five Key Aspects of Catholic Schooling and associated components are as follows:

Key Aspect of Schooling	Components
<b>Catholic School Culture</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Religious Education</li><li>● Enhancing Catholic Identity</li><li>● Social Action and Justice</li></ul>
<b>Community Engagement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Partnering with Families</li><li>● Community Partnerships</li></ul>
<b>Leadership and Stewardship</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Shared Leadership</li><li>● Building Staff Capability</li><li>● A Culture of Continuous Improvement</li><li>● Stewardship of Resources</li></ul>
<b>Learning and Teaching</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● A Guaranteed and Viable Curriculum</li><li>● Effective Teaching</li><li>● Engaging Students in their Own Learning</li><li>● Analysis and Use of Data</li><li>● Coordinated Strategies for Intervention</li></ul>
<b>Wellbeing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Quality Relationships</li><li>● Wellbeing Practices</li><li>● Safe Learning Environment</li></ul>

## Principles of School Self-Reflection

School self-reflection on student progress and its relation to teacher practice is a critical step in ensuring continual school improvement. This includes its effectiveness:

- as a learning community
- of its school improvement processes and their impact on student outcomes
- of the learning in classrooms

*(Chapman & Sammons, 2013, p. 8)*

School self-reflection is a constant process undertaken by the school as part of the School Improvement Cycle. It is also a critical precursor in the External Review: Validation and Planning process in that schools reflect on the recent past achievements, providing an evidence-based approach to the identification of challenges and future directions for the school. This requires effective skills in reflecting on progress against benchmarks or standards and stated school improvement priorities.

*Teachers need to be equipped with the necessary skills to be able to evaluate the teaching and learning in their own classrooms and that an external review would then be welcomed in order to enhance and support good practice. In effect this would leave external review as a validation process for school self-evaluation (Chapman & Sammons, 2013, p. 12).*

The *Characteristics of A Highly Effective Catholic School* is the standard for schools in the Diocese of Ballarat to constantly reflect on their progress in school improvement. Schools use the *Characteristics of Highly Effective Catholic Schools Reflection Tool* to pinpoint their strengths and challenges. This reflection and evaluation is supported by *Multiple Sources of Data* which assist schools in planning for future evidence-based improvement goals and strategies for further improvement. The *drivers* of school self-reflection are:

Drivers	Requirements
<b>Leadership</b>	Involves: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Developing the collective responsibility for realising the school’s vision and mission</li> <li>● Identifying and ensuring collective ownership of the directions and strategies for school improvement</li> <li>● High expectations of staff</li> <li>● High expectations for student learning and growth which is regularly monitored through data</li> <li>● Ongoing processes to build staff capacity within collaborative learning communities</li> <li>● Effective processes for leading and managing change</li> <li>● Strategies for developing and monitoring of the school’s effectiveness as a performance and development culture</li> <li>● Maintaining effective partnerships within the diocese to enable improved educational outcomes for all students</li> </ul>
<b>Collaboration</b>	Involves: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Leaders, staff and School Advisory Council working together in a climate of trust and respect, in consultation and partnership with parents, students, parish, CEOB and wider community to bring about school improvement.</li> </ul>
<b>Reflection and Evaluation</b>	Involves: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Clear processes for rigorous reflection on student learning, school climate and wellbeing against the School Improvement Plan and Annual Action Plan</li> <li>● Constantly asking the following questions:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What is it we want our students to learn (and be able to do)?</li> <li>How will we know if our students are learning?</li> <li>How will we respond if our students are not learning?</li> <li>How will we enrich and extend the learning for students who are already proficient?</li> <li>How will we increase our instructional competence?</li> <li>How will we co-ordinate our efforts as a school? (DuFour et al, 2017)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>Evidence-based Decision Making</b>	Involves: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Analysis of data and teaching practice which results in prioritising specific classroom and intervention strategies, professional learning, family and community partnerships, school organization and resources to deliver high quality education consistent with the <i>Characteristics of a Highly Effective Catholic School</i> (DOBCEL, 2019)</li> </ul>

## School Improvement Cycle

The School Improvement Cycle provides specific components that are attended over the five-year cycle to ensure continuous improvement. At all stages of the cycle, schools focus their reflection on where the school is currently performing across the five key aspects of schooling. This provides the opportunity for a school to gather, interpret and analyse data to determine the next steps to school improvement.

Continuous school improvement is the responsibility of all members of the school community, effectively led by the principal and leadership team. Throughout the school improvement cycle it is important that opportunities are provided to reflect on and analyse how the school is progressing towards the goals of the School Improvement Plan.

Therefore, the following conditions need to be in place in each school:

- recognition of and encouragement for all staff to have a leadership role in school improvement
- student learning is a basis for powerful staff learning
- have effective change processes to guide school improvement
- planned and regular reflection on the five key aspects of schooling through dialogue with all members of the school community using a process of analysis, evaluation and recommendation
- development of a shared language around the Vision that the school is working towards the School Improvement Cycle
- focus on the needs of all students and adoption of evidence-based strategies in the local context but with flexibility to adapt and modify directions to meet positive educational outcomes
- use of multiple sources of data including the *Characteristics of a Highly Effective Catholic School* self-assessment, the *School Improvement* survey, *Enhancing Catholic School Identity* survey, diocesan, state and national testing, school assessment measures (formal and informal) to assist in the development optimal learning and teaching environments
- participation in professional development on the effective use of data to improve learning and teaching practice
- empowerment of all staff and the wider community (where relevant) in school improvement processes

At the school and system level there are external review processes for Risk Management, Facilities Master Planning and VRQA Compliance that are integral to school improvement. These are reviewed cyclically at the school and at the system level according to the *School Improvement and Accountability Schedule*. This ensures that diocesan, government and community expectations are met regarding resource management, provision of a safe environment and Catholic school viability.

## Components of the Five-Year School Improvement Cycle

The components of each year of the cycle are:

### Annually

Reflect on and analyse school performance  
Develop the Annual Action Plan  
Implement effective processes with allocated roles and responsibilities

### Year One

Finalise the five-year School Improvement Plan  
**External Review: Facilities Master Planning**

### Year Two

#### **School Improvement Plan Review**

Review of the key improvement priorities that underpin the School Improvement Plan

School Leadership present to peers & Educational Consultant

#### **School Improvement Survey**

### Year Three

**External Review: Risk Management**  
**VRQA minimum standards audit**  
**Enhancing Catholic School Identity Survey**

### Year Four

Schools begin self-reflection process informed by the **Characteristics of a Highly Effective Catholic School** in readiness for External Review: Validation and Planning

#### **School Improvement Survey**

### Year Five

#### **External Review: Validation & Planning**

Completion of Self-reflection Process

Online CHECS survey

School Reflection Report completed

School Improvement Plan formulated

<b>School Improvement Framework Annual Focus</b>	
Self-Reflection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Schools constantly review their progress using evidence to assess strategies for further improvement</li> <li>● See also multiple sources of data</li> </ul>
Annual Action Plan (AAP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Describes the key strategies in the School Improvement Plan to enhance student learning and become a highly effective Catholic school in the Diocese of Ballarat.</li> <li>● Requires ongoing monitoring and evaluation of priorities, goals and strategies against analysis of data</li> <li>● See Requirements for the Annual Action Plan</li> </ul>
School Improvement: Implementation Processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The school provides training and support to ensure it has evidence-based processes that can be used to deliver an effective response to change that may be required as the school responds to its improvement priorities</li> <li>● The process ensures consultation with staff and the school community and develops direction for future action</li> <li>● Involves developing a strong vision and process for the changes in practice and/or organisation that will be necessary to effectively implement the intent of the critical challenge</li> <li>● Recognises that staff capacity to change can be influenced by how change is presented to them</li> <li>● Assists the school community to understand the benefits of change, and the plan for change</li> <li>● The process delivers a project plan and strategic communication, and addresses risk management</li> </ul>
Annual Report to the School Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Informs the community of the school's progress in addressing the articulated priorities and goals in the AAP</li> <li>● Incorporates diocesan and government policy requirements</li> <li>● Report on the outcomes of the AAP</li> <li>● Submitted to CEOB for placement on State Register (VRQA)</li> </ul>

<b>First Year of School Improvement Cycle</b>	
School Improvement Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Schools finalise and publish their five-year School Improvement Plan in live with Federal Requirements</li> </ul>
External Review: Master Facilities Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● See section <i>School Improvement: Monitoring and Auditing (page 28)</i></li> </ul>



Second Year of School Improvement Cycle	
School Improvement Plan Review: Purpose	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Ensures the ongoing relevance and strategic importance of the school's long-term School Improvement Plan</li> <li>● Identifies any issues and works in partnership to develop solutions</li> <li>● Celebrates the achievements</li> <li>● Ensures that all data sources are being used effectively to inform the annual action plan</li> </ul>
School Improvement Plan Review: Process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● School leadership team presents progress of the School Improvement Plan to the Educational Consultant and Peer Colleague from the Review and Validation Panel</li> <li>● Presentation and discussion to be no longer than 1.5 - 2 hours</li> <li>● Reports progress on priorities and goals supported by evidence</li> <li>● Provides consideration for action over the remainder of the school improvement cycle</li> </ul>
School Improvement Survey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Staff, Student and Parent surveys provide information on organisational climate, teaching climate, student wellbeing and community engagement</li> <li>● Conducted in the first and third year of the school improvement cycle</li> <li>● All staff, and a representative number of students and parents are invited to participate in the survey</li> </ul>

Third Year of School Improvement Cycle	
Review of VRQA Minimum Standards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● See section <i>School Improvement: Monitoring and Auditing (page 27)</i></li> </ul>
Enhancing Catholic School Identity Surveys	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● ECSI Survey is undertaken in the third year of the School Improvement Cycle</li> <li>● School staff, and a representative number of students and parents are invited to participate in the surveys</li> </ul>
External Review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Risk Management</li> </ul>

Fourth Year of School Improvement Cycle	
Methodology for School Reflection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The school in collaboration with the Educational Consultant, develops the methodology and timeline for School Reflection</li> <li>• Schools begin self-reflection process informed by <b>the Characteristics of a Highly Effective Catholic School</b> in readiness for External Review: Validation and Planning</li> </ul>
School Improvement Survey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff Student and Parent surveys provide information on organisational climate, teaching climate, student wellbeing and community engagement</li> <li>• Conducted in the first and third year of the school improvement cycle</li> <li>• All staff, and a representative number of students and parents are invited to participate in the survey</li> </ul>

Fifth Year of School Improvement Cycle	
School Reflection Report School Data Profile	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• School Reflection Report and School Data Profile are key documents used to evaluate school improvement progress and discern future priorities, goals and improvement strategies</li> <li>• It is supported by analysis of multiple sources of data including the <i>Characteristics of Highly Effective Catholic Schools</i> online survey and self-assessment tool</li> <li>• It is recommended that this work be commenced during the second semester of the year prior</li> </ul>
Multiple Data Sources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Includes assessment processes, diocesan and school surveys, and state and national testing results</li> <li>• Trend data is analysed</li> <li>• Includes demographic, perception, outcome, and process data sets</li> </ul>
Characteristics of Highly Effective Catholic Schools (CHECS) Online Self-Assessment Survey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organised according to Vision and Mission and the Key Aspects of Schooling with components that describe and provide examples of observable practices that demonstrate highly effective Catholic schools.</li> <li>• Used to determine strengths and challenges against a six-point scale</li> <li>• Assisted by use of CHECS online survey</li> </ul>
Review and Validation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Undertaken by a panel consisting of an external lead reviewer who leads the process, a representative of the CEOB and a peer nominee of the principal</li> <li>• The principles of procedural fairness, transparency, excellence, efficiency and effectiveness underpin the process</li> </ul>

Review and Validation Panel's Report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Developed by the lead reviewer in consultation with the Review and Validation Panel</li> <li>• Provides a validation of the School Reflection Report and recommendations for the future</li> </ul>
School Improvement Plan (SIP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Draws on evidence and analysis generated by the school reflection and external review processes</li> <li>• Includes clearly articulated priorities (key improvements to maximise student outcomes), links to the relevant components of CHECS, proposed strategies and milestones</li> <li>• Provides a challenging vehicle for school improvement whilst maintaining a realistic balance of what is achievable within a five-year cycle</li> <li>• Provides the basis of reflection for the next review and validation process</li> </ul>
Executive Director's Visit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Director of Catholic Education Ballarat, and Deputy Director meet with the school leadership team and Educational Consultant (and other CEOB personnel as required) to discuss the outcome of the school reflection and the review and validation</li> <li>• School Improvement Plan provides the basis for professional conversation about the school priorities for the following improvement cycle</li> <li>• Identification of specific assistance (outside of school resources) for consideration of Director</li> </ul>

### Developing A New School Improvement Plan



## Responsibilities

The School Improvement Policy and Procedures identify the key responsibilities for schools and the Catholic Education office, Ballarat.

## Schools

Each school is required to:

- review and monitor policies and practices consistent with diocesan, government and community requirements and expectations;
- implement the *CEB School Improvement Framework (SIF)* or, in the case of schools governed by a Religious Institute or Ministerial Public Juridic Person, another process agreed between the Governing Authority and the Director of Catholic Education (See CEB SIF for requirements);
- implement effective professional learning for all staff ;
- participate in the diocesan strategy for Enhancing of Catholic School Identity (ECSI);
- work collaboratively with all staff, CEOB and the wider school community to engage in ongoing dialogue and encourage ownership of school improvement within their context
- work collaboratively with the CEB in implementing the elements of the *School Improvement and Accountability Schedule*;
- regularly inform the Catholic Education Office, Ballarat through the Educational Consultant, on progress and challenges towards school improvement;
- develop an effective performance and development culture;
- use multiple sources of evidence and processes of reflection, feedback and evaluation to constantly refine school improvement;
- implement and maintain the VRQA minimum standards;
- maintain compliance with all legislative and legal obligations.

## Catholic Education Ballarat

Catholic Education Office, Ballarat will:

- provide access to school improvement resources;
- in partnership, implement and review processes and outcomes of the *School Improvement and Accountability Schedule*;
- provide timely coordinate, communicate and support schools' participation in the school improvement cycle;
- provide professional learning that assists schools in building capacity for effective processes and structures for school improvement;
- review every five years the implementation and resources associated with the CEB School Improvement Framework;
- in partnership undertake ongoing analysis of the outcomes of all components of school improvement ;
- report school compliance to the DOBCEL Board, the Catholic Education Commission of Victoria and to State and Australian Governments as required.

## PROCESS FOR EXTERNAL REVIEW: VALIDATION AND PLANNING

### School Reflection

A key focus for school improvement is school reflection that occurs continually and is reviewed externally in the fifth year of a school improvement cycle. The *School Reflection Report* is a critical document in which the school analyses the priorities and strategies of the SIP using *multiple sources of data* to verify progress and develop further directions. The rigour of the self-reflection that the school undertakes impacts on the quality of the School Reflection Report. The quality of self-reflection of school improvement progress is underpinned by effective leadership driving and critically analysing achievement and challenges.

See also *School Reflection Principles of School Self-Reflection*

### School Reflection Process

The principal, leadership team and staff need to develop a methodology outlining the process and timeline for developing the School Reflection Report. The methodology will include a process for analysing Multiple Sources of Data. To ensure that the data is valid and comprehensive, it is useful to use triangulation of data sources. This is the comparison and analysis of one source of evidence with a second and a third (or more) source. Data sources include:

- Demographic data: Information about our people
- Perception data: Information about the opinions and ideas of our school community
- Outcome data: Information about the results of our school's educational system
- Process data: Information about how we operate *(CEO Sydney, 2013, p 23)*

The timeline needs to allow for adequate time for the school to effectively consult with all staff and the school community, analysis of all forms of data and completion of the School Reflection Report. The Governing Authority and the School Advisory Council (SAC) should also be informed and given opportunities to provide input and clarify any issues. The educational consultant (CEOB) is informed of the process and timeline. The educational consultant can play a role in providing advice and examples of different methodologies that may assist in formulating an approach for the school.

It is important that the reflection process allow opportunities for staff members to lead in its development. Staff leading the process provides important opportunities for them to build their leadership capabilities. This also impacts on greater shared responsibility and ownership for not just the School Reflection Report but for the outcomes of the review and validation and in developing School Improvement and Annual Action Plans.

### School Reflection Documents

School is asked to prepare two reflection documents using the approved templates:

- School Data Profile
- School Reflection Report

The school is to send these documents to the Review and Validation Panel at least two weeks prior to the validation and planning process.

Requirements for Completing the School Data Profile	
<b>School Data Profile: School Context</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• includes information in tables as specified</li> <li>• includes additional relevant information that would be important in understanding school context</li> </ul>

<b>School Data Profile: School Data</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• includes summary of trend data that is inserted according to requirements</li> <li>• indicates optional data that could be included</li> <li>• allows for other school-based data</li> <li>• all staff need access to the data listed in the data profile</li> <li>• the lead reviewer may request additional data (this is not required to be inserted into the data profile, and will be made available for the Panel)</li> </ul>
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Requirements for Completing the School Reflection Report	
<b>Executive Summary</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Finalised after review of Key Aspects of Schooling</li> </ul>
<b>Context</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• School Contextual Statement</li> </ul>
<b>Methodology</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• outline the process used to develop the Reflection Report</li> <li>• indicate who led and was involved in the process</li> <li>• methodology should reflect a collaborative process that allows for shared leadership and consultation with leadership team, staff and school community</li> </ul>
<b>Vision and Mission: How is our Catholic School Vision/Mission embedded in what we have achieved?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• insert current vision and date when developed</li> <li>• summary analysis of what has been achieved in key aspects of schooling over the last period</li> <li>• can use paragraphs and table and bulleting formats</li> <li>• data from CHECS for Vision and Mission identified</li> </ul>
<b>School Self-reflection</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• reflect on how priorities from the previous improvement period have been addressed</li> <li>• identify of the data and evidence that will inform the current reality reflections</li> <li>• identify current strengths and challenges using the evidence and data (current reality)</li> <li>• identify future foci for improvement to be considered in developing the key priorities for the School Improvement Plan</li> </ul>
<b>Characteristics of Highly A Effective Catholic</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• completed by all staff (and others) following the completion of the current reality reflections</li> <li>• considers evidence in relation to all CHECS components</li> </ul>

<b>School Self-Assessment Survey</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● determines whole school ratings of effective practice</li> <li>● informs the identification of school improvement foci and key improvement priorities</li> </ul>
<b>School Improvement Priorities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● once completed at the end of the reflection and validation process, the key priorities will inform the school improvement plan</li> <li>● it provides the direction that the school believes it should pursue in the next improvement cycle</li> <li>● the school will identify <b>no more than three key priorities</b>, the aspects and components to which they will pertain and strategies and actions for school improvement for the next improvement cycle</li> <li>● the school finalises the school improvement plan after the review and validation process</li> </ul>

### Review and Validation Process

The purpose of the Review and Validation process is to validate and challenge the rigour of the School Reflection Report and the improvement journey over the previous improvement period. It works with the school to determine the key priorities that will form the basis of the School Improvement Plan for the next period.

#### Focus

The panel, chaired by a lead reviewer, focuses on:

- validating the performance data against standards and benchmarks, evidence and additional information gathered in the School Reflection Report
- meeting with individuals, focus groups and school panel
- recommending challenges to be addressed in the ensuing School Improvement Plan
- developing the Review and Validation Panel Report

Members of the Panel need to have an understanding of the Catholic context for school improvement. This context includes a knowledge of the importance of *Enhancing Catholic School Identity and Performance and Development Culture*.

*See also Australian Teacher Performance and Development Framework. AITSL 2012*

### Review and Validation Panel

The review and validation of schools is undertaken by a Review and Validation Panel (panel) consisting of:

- an external lead reviewer (an approved CEOB lead reviewer)
- the local educational consultant
- an educational colleague, (external to the school, invited by the local Educational Consultant following consultation with the Principal)

It is expected that panel members will undertake appropriate professional development provided by CEB for conducting an external review.

#### Code of Conduct

The principles of procedural fairness, transparency, excellence, efficiency and effectiveness underpin review and validation.

Panel members must:

- act in the best interests of students
- validate school reflection report professionally and objectively
- respect the confidentiality of school or personal information collected during the external review - validation and planning process
- communicate with the school clearly and openly
- report on school performance honestly and fairly

### **Role of Review and Validation Panel and Panel Members**

The panel provides a critique of the School Reflection Report validating the extent to which evidence demonstrates the school's achievement and recommending refinements or further development to be considered in the formation of the ensuing School Improvement Plan. Further information and evidence will be sought via the meetings with appropriate school and community personnel.

The review and validation will take place in the school over two to three days (depending on size and context of school).

The panel will:

- collaboratively develop a report for the school and the Executive Director of Catholic Education, Ballarat. It provides a basis for further dialogue on school improvement with the Educational Consultant.
- communicate to staff, governing authority, school advisory council/school board and wider school community on the outcomes of the review and the priorities for improvement.

### **The lead reviewer:**

- be familiar with the School Improvement Handbook and the School Validation and Planning process
- undertake appropriate professional development provided by CEB for conducting an external review.
- meet (at the Pre-Visit, see below) with the principal prior to the panel days to discuss the format and requirements of the review of the School Reflection Report.
- negotiate a schedule for the Review and Validation Panel days in consultation with the principal and the Educational Consultant, including meetings with the governing authority, the principal, leadership team, school advisory council/school board, staff, and students.
- communicate and consult with the panel on the format and requirements of the review.
- receive the School Reflection Report at least two weeks prior to the review and validation and distribute to the panel members.
- lead the validation and planning process
- establish the makeup of focus groups in collaboration with the Principal
- identify additional data (if required) and share this with all panel members
- ensure all voices are heard
- author the External Review (Validation and Planning) Report on behalf of the Panel (including the summary report to the school community)



### **The Educational Consultant:**

- be familiar with the School Improvement Handbook
- provide professional advice and support to the Principal throughout the process
- bring a deeper local knowledge to the process that can help context the data and provide background to the school's journey
- have a sense of the future directions of the school
- provide a system perspective to the process

### **The educational colleague:**

- undertake appropriate professional development provided by CEB for conducting an external review;
- be familiar with the school improvement process as outlined in the handbook;
- familiarise themselves with the school's context, data and reflection report;
- provide collegial support to the Principal and the school panel;
- support the Lead Reviewer in the process;
- provide a current school leadership perspective to the process;
- bring a further level of expertise to the process;
- respond promptly to the lead reviewer's draft report.

### **Role of the School Principal**

The School Principal will:

- exercise leadership in the overall School Review: Validation and Planning process;
- send all documentation to the panel members as required;
- arrange the membership and availability of the school panel for the panel day;
- provide suitable meeting spaces with appropriate seating for adults;
- facilitate the availability of staff, students, parents and School Advisory Council for the focus groups (in consultation with the Lead Reviewer;)
- organise meals, accommodation, etc for the panel if required;
- review the draft review report and respond promptly to the lead reviewer.

### **Phases of Review and Validation Program (Primary and Secondary Schools)**

CEB will consult with schools regarding the timing of the review and validation and lead the organization of the Panel.

#### **Phase 1: The Pre-Visit**

The lead reviewer will undertake a pre-visit to the school prior to the scheduled review. This visit should be negotiated with the school principal. It should occur at least three weeks prior to the review and validation panel process. The pre-visit is an opportunity for the lead reviewer and the principal to meet and clarify expectations for the review visit. It is not necessary to include other school personnel at this time.

The pre-visit will normally include the following elements:

- A visit of approximately two hours
- A tour of the school
- The schedule, to be negotiated between the principal and the lead reviewer

At least two weeks prior to the scheduled review and validation panel visit, the school is to provide an electronic copy of the following to all panel members.

All Schools:

- School Data Profile
- School Reflection Report
- Previous School Improvement Plan and Review and Validation Panel's Report
- Annual Action Plans (since last review and validation)
- Most recent School Improvement Survey Data Report (Insight SRC Report)
- Most recent Enhancing Catholic School Identity (ECSI) Survey Report
- VCAA/VCE data (if applicable)
- NAPLAN Data Service login and password
- Teacher Assessment of Student Achievement (TASA) against Victorian Curriculum
- Other data as requested by the Lead Reviewer

Schools should also include any other data which they think will be critical for the panel to have access; however, it is important that any data provided to panels should be aggregated rather than individual reports.

**Phase 2: Review and Validation Format**

The specific program for the review and validation process will be negotiated as part of the pre-visit and would normally include the following:

Focus Group Meetings:

- Leadership team
- Leaders of Catholic Identity & Mission
- Leaders of Learning
- Leaders of Wellbeing
- Teachers
- Students
- School Advisory Council/School Board members
- Parents
- Parish Priest
- Governing Authority of Religious Congregation Schools (where appropriate)

Validation and Recommendations Meeting (chaired by the Lead Reviewer) including:

- Review and Validation Panel
- School Panel (suggested):
  - Principal
  - Deputy Principal
  - Leadership Team members
  - Parish Priest

- Governing Authority of Religious Congregation Schools (where appropriate)
- SAC / Board representative
- Teacher representative/s (relevant to the specific areas of review)

#### Agenda for Validation and Recommendations Meeting:

- Discussion session/introduction – at the discretion of the Panel
- Discussion and validation of the School Reflection Report
- Clarification of three key priorities for future improvement
- Further considerations raised by the panel for the School Improvement Plan
- Feedback for staff and community meeting

#### Review and Validation Panel's Report:

A critical task for the panel is to work with the school in discerning the focus of the priorities that will evolve from the future improvement foci listed in each of the key aspects of schooling in the School Reflection Report. These priorities will become the key drivers for school improvement over the next period. The report provides a validation of the School Reflection Report and clarification of the listed priorities as well as providing future challenges that the panel believes would be beneficial to address. It is the school's responsibility to consider the recommendations and develop the School Improvement Plan.

The panel will validate the school reflection report as well as pose challenges for the school that have not been identified. This report should not exceed twenty pages in length.

#### 1. The *Executive Summary* will include:

- Preamble
- Methodology

#### 2. The sections on *Vision* and the *Key Aspects of Schooling* will provide expansion (though may be bulleted) on:

- Achievements (in each Component)
- Overall Challenges in relation to each aspect
- Agreed key improvements for each aspect the school ought to consider based on data and educational research.

*(See extract on 28)*

#### 3. At the end of the report will be a section for *School Improvement Priorities*. This will include (in table form):

- Key Priorities (normally no more than three)
- Links to relevant Components of the Key Aspects of Schooling that will drive the implementation of the priority
- Suggested Strategies and Actions

#### 4. The *School Community Report*

The Leader reviewer is asked to provide a summary report that can be provided to the school community following the Validation and Planning process. This report, with the inclusion of some photographs, should not ultimately exceed two pages. (The school will insert the photographs). This community report brings together positive elements of the preamble, some of the school's broad challenges and the priorities identified to bring about overall school improvement over the next five years.

Within thirty days of the review and validation panel meeting, the lead reviewer will forward the final report to the Director of Catholic Education, Ballarat.

Within thirty days the following needs to occur:

- The lead reviewer will forward a draft report to the panel for verification and feedback.
- The panel will provide feedback to the lead reviewer.
- The lead reviewer will then forward the draft report to the principal
- The principal will check the report and return it to the lead reviewer.
- Following feedback from the principal, the lead reviewer will complete the final Review and Validation Report and send it to the Executive Director, Catholic Education Ballarat, who will forward it to the governing authority, school principal and Education Consultant
- Copies of the School Reflection Report and the Review and Validation Report will be archived centrally by CEB

The Panel Report should reflect the following:

- The Panel will use the School Reflection Report to articulate the school's achievements and how these achievements are validated by multiple sources of data
- The Panel will be expected to discern aspects that the school had not considered in their Reflection Report and is evidenced in the data.
- The Panel report can reference the School Reflection Report but should not contain verbatim sections copied from it.

## Key Aspect One: CATHOLIC SCHOOL CULTURE

### 1. Achievements

List achievements for each component of the aspect

- *Religious Education*
- *Enhancing Catholic School Identity*
- *Social Action for Justice*

### 2. Challenges and Opportunities

List challenges and opportunities for the Aspect overall

### 3. Agreed key improvements for this aspect for the next five years as articulated through the review process

## School Improvement Priorities

**Clarified Priorities for the School Improvement Plan** (as a consequence of School Reflection Report and External Review Process)

The following template is provided. In completing this section, the Review and Validation Panel should be guided by the school and their considerations in the School Reflection Report. The Panel would be best to probe key questions if an aspect that the school has not recognised as important needs to be considered.

**It is important that the priorities do not extend beyond three.** This is in keeping with research that schools need to have fewer priorities and work on them continuously through a set period.

Proposed Key Priorities <i>(A priority articulates the direction the school will take to bring about key improvements to maximise student outcomes.)</i>	Components of CHECS that will <b>drive</b> the implementation of this priority  (Ref: CHECS Document)	Specific Strategies and Actions that may support the implementation of this priority

The Review (Validation and Planning) Panel endorses each of the Key Priorities articulated above.

OR

While the school has identified the Key Priorities articulated above, the Review Panel suggests that further consideration be given to...

### **Phase 3: School Improvement Plan (SIP)**

Upon the completion of the Review and Validation process, schools are required to finalise their School Improvement Plan. Schools would use the agreed School Improvement Priorities as the basis of the new five-year School Improvement Plan. The School Improvement Plan also includes the elements required by the Federal Government as a condition of funding.

CEOB staff will be available to support each school in the development of School Improvement Plans.

### **Phase 4: Executive Director's Visit**

At the conclusion of the review and validation process, the principal (and where applicable the school leadership team) and governing authority will meet with the Director and Deputy Director of Catholic Education Ballarat, Education Consultant (for the school) and other relevant CEOB personnel as required.

The school will present a summary of the progress made over the last improvement cycle against the *School Improvement Plan*, outlining the key achievements and challenges and identifying how the priorities will be addressed.

### **Overview of Review and Validation Process**

<b>Year 4 of School Improvement Cycle</b>	<b>Preparation for Validation and Review</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Schools consulted on possible timeframe for review</li><li>● Educational Consultant provides formation for school principals and leadership teams on the overall review (validation and planning) process</li><li>● School participation in required CEB data surveys:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ <i>School Improvement Survey</i></li><li>▪ <i>Enhancing Catholic School Identity Surveys</i></li></ul></li><li>● Principal informs governing authority and school community of the process</li></ul>
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<b>Year 5 of School Improvement Cycle</b>	<b>School Reflection</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Develop a methodology for reviewing progress using the School Reflection Report Template</li> <li>● Prepare the School Data Profile and the School Reflection Report for the Panel and make available two weeks before the review and validation visit Complete <i>Characteristics of a Highly Effective Catholic School</i> online survey</li> <li>● Implement reflection process including rigorous data analysis</li> </ul>
	<b>Review and Validation Panel (Panel)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Lead reviewer and panel members confirmed by CEOB</li> <li>● School advised of Panel membership</li> <li>● Lead reviewer visits the school and discusses process, data and timeline</li> <li>● Educational Consultant provides professional learning for Panel on the review process</li> </ul>
	<b>Review and Validation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Panel led by lead reviewer conducts the review and validation</li> <li>● Focus groups and individual interviews on first day</li> <li>● Validation and Recommendations Meeting with principal, other school and school community representatives and Educational Consultant to discuss findings, validations and recommendations (final day)</li> </ul>
	<b>Review and Validation Panel's Report</b>	Within thirty days of the review and validation panel meeting, the lead reviewer will forward the final report to the Executive Director of Catholic Education Ballarat (as outlined on page 25 of this handbook.)
	<b>Development of School Improvement Plan (SIP)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● School considers outcomes of School Reflection Report and Review and Validation Panel's Report to develop School Improvement Plan</li> <li>● School leadership and staff develop the School Improvement Plan in consultation with the School Advisory Council</li> </ul>
	<b>Directors' Visit</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Date is established early in School Reflection Validation and Planning Year</li> <li>● School Improvement Plan, School Data Profile and School Reflection Report is provided to CEB prior to visit</li> <li>● School leadership team present outcomes of school reflection and review and validation and explanation of School Improvement Plan</li> <li>● Support strategies and resources to support the School Improvement Plan are discussed</li> </ul>

## The Annual Action Plan

The Annual Action Plan has a focus on the key elements that are to be included in all Annual Action Plans. Sample templates will be provided as a guide. The key elements are:

- Reflection Summary (Current Reality, as evidenced by data)
- Key priorities (no more than three) as identified in the School Improvement Plan.
- Stated links to the five Key Aspects of Catholic Schooling.
- Strategies linked to the priorities
- Staff Learning
- Targets (relating to student learning)
- Milestones / Success Criteria connected to timelines
- Responsibilities
- Monitoring and review

It will be an expectation that the school complete an ongoing **Reflection** which includes:

- Did we achieve the intended improvement this year? Why/Why not?
- How do we continue to make improvement or what do we need to do to make the improvement that was identified for this year?
- What key improvements do we intend to achieve next year? Who will lead this?
- What evidenced-based strategies and resources will we use? What professional learning will be required?
- How will we monitor our progress? What process will be used and when will it be monitored?
- What will be our targets?
- Have we identified progressive milestones?
- How do we engage all staff in the intention of the Annual Action Plan?

CEOB provides sample Annual Action Plan templates to assist schools. School can develop their own template but needs to have the elements stated above.



## SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT: MONITORING AND AUDITING

At the system and school level there are a further three external review processes for monitoring and auditing schools:

- Facilities Master Planning
- Risk Management
- Review of VRQA Minimum Standards

These processes ensure:

- schools remain viable in all aspects of their functions and educational directions
- resources (human, physical, environmental and financial) are effectively managed and utilised for current and future student learning
- policies and processes meet diocesan, government requirements and community expectations and respond to the needs of all students
- the safety of all within the school environment
- effective processes that respect the dignity of all and allows for effective dialogue on the learning environment and outcomes for students
- effective system and school partnership in monitoring of these areas

These processes are focused on maintaining high standards in resource and policy management that includes the physical environment, the safety of staff, students and parents, educational standards, and policies that are vital for an effective functioning Catholic school. Evidence suggests that strategic resourcing and ensuring an orderly and supportive environment can have an impact on school improvement (Robinson, 2007). Research indicates that successful leaders are able to 'respond productively to challenges and opportunities created by the accountability-orientated policy context in which they work' (Leithwood & Riehl 2003, p 8). They also ensure that resources are strongly aligned to the vision and goals to support teachers in enhancing student outcomes (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003).

Effective stewardship of the financial, physical and environmental resources is a key component to meet learning and wellbeing needs of students, staff and the school community. Ensuring an orderly and safe environment can have a significant impact and includes:

- behaviour management processes that are clearly communicated and followed
- addressing conflict management as it occurs
- managing disruptions to teaching time
- managing parent and external pressures on teachers

(Robinson, 2007)

*See School Improvement and Accountability Schedule*

## External Review: Facilities Master Plan

### *Year One of School Improvement Cycle*

A facilities master plan provides a connection between the school's educational philosophy and the built environment. The master plan connects the school's vision for; learning and teaching, curriculum needs and directions, class structures and integration of technology to the provision of facilities.

Facility master planning is a process in which the physical environment of the school is reviewed and plans are made for future development based on a thorough review of the schools learning and teaching philosophy which forms part of the brief to the master plan coordinator such as an architect/designer. This ensures that the:

- educational and functional area information are clearly defined
- drawings identify stages of development
- Cost estimates are known and can be analysed according to the scope of the project
- Plan to implement the master plan is in line with:
  - Changes to learning and teaching
  - Increased / decreased enrolments
  - Traffic movement including vehicular and pedestrian circulation around and on site
  - 'Design in the Workplace', occupational health and safety regulations and other issues
  - Accessibility which conforms with the Building Code of Australia and Disability and Discrimination Act requirements
  - Cash flow – an examination of the school's capacity to service loans

Future maintenance planning and provision is also audited to ensure that the physical environment is maintained and sustainable.

Master facilities planning and maintenance provision should also consider effective stewardship of the resources and builds in strategies and solutions that assist in protecting and managing the whole environment.

## External Review: Risk Management

### *Year Two of School Improvement Cycle*

Risk management ensures that schools continue to deliver a viable Catholic education that safeguards the wellbeing of all within the school environment, promotes effective decision-making and use of resources and contributes to meeting diocesan, community and government expectations for policy and resources management. CEOB supports school in monitoring and auditing risk management. Risk management includes the monitoring and auditing of:

- performance and viability
- workplace occupational health and safety
- public liability
- school infrastructure
- human resource management
- child protection procedures
- financial management and audit
- information technology business systems

Schools are expected to annually monitor risk management. CEOB has an important role in implementing system risk management processes for monitoring school improvement. Schools are reviewed for risk management according to the *School Improvement and Accountability Schedule*. Schools may however be reviewed at any stage of the SI Cycle on a needs basis. The CEOB has strategies to assist in the monitoring and auditing of this area.

### **CEOB Risk Management Committee**

This committee monitors risk management through analysing data in the area of risk management that is collected on an annual basis and in specific years of the SI Cycle to assess the school at a specific point in time as well as trend data according to a rating that identifies low, medium and high risks. The CEOB follows up with the school and the governing authority as required.

### **School Performance and Sustainability**

The Leadership Team of the Catholic Education, Ballarat monitor specific variables across parish and diocesan schools on a cyclical basis. The focus for school performance and sustainability is divided into six areas:

- Catholic identity
- Educational outcomes
- Enrolment
- Financial sustainability
- Geographic factors
- Staffing

### **School Self-Risk Reviews**

CEB conducts School Self Risk Reviews which are designed to assist schools to identify and assess risk controls inherent to their facility and operations. It encourages the development of practical risk management systems and procedures to reduce the likelihood and/or severity of loss. The School Risk Reviews include:

- workplace occupational health and safety
- public liability
- property
- human resources policy and procedures
- financial management
- information technology business systems

The provision of School Self Risk Reviews supports schools:

- in educating and assisting schools to understand their risks;
- ensuring schools are able to substantiate their risk management systems and processes are operational and working as intended;
- in providing risk management resources and actions to prevent the likelihood and/or severity of a loss

### **Occupational Health and Safety Audit**

The school also participates in an Occupational Health and Safety Audit which is conducted during this year to validate the workplace occupational health and safety section of the School Self Risk review. The audit is conducted by the CECV Industrial Relations Unit.

The outcomes of this audit is provided to the school and CEB. It is reviewed by the CEB Committee in conjunction with the School Risk Review.

### **External Financial Audit**

An external financial audit is an independent assessment of financial recording and reporting processes and financial viability. Schools' financial arrangements need to be based on sound financial management and business practices. An external financial audit is an independent assessment of financial recording and reporting processes and financial viability.

This process is implemented annually, and the outcomes reviewed annually by CEB and is taken into account in assessing all the components of risk management in the second year of the School Improvement and Accountability Cycle.

See: DOBCEL External Financial Audit Policy  
DOBCEL Financial Management and Accountability Procedures  
DOBCEL Fraud Prevention and Reporting Policy and Procedures  
DOBCEL School Financial Management and Accountability Procedures  
DOBCEL Roles and Responsibilities: Managing Financial Obligations  
DOBCEL Financial Segregation Procedures  
DOBCEL Delegations Policy and Procedures  
DOBCEL Child Safe Governance Policy  
DOBCEL Child Safety Risk Management in Schools Policy and  
DOBCEL Child Safeguarding Children Code of Conduct  
DOBCEL Duty of Care Supervision of Students Policy  
DOBCEL Child Safeguarding Reporting Obligations Policy  
DOBCEL Occupational Health and Safety Policy Procedures and Appendix  
CEB Governing Authority Principal Checklist

## External Compliance Audit: VRQA Minimum Standards

*Year Three of School Improvement Cycle*

*Registered schools must meet the requirements of the schools must meet the requirements of the Education and Training Reform Act 2006 (the Act) and the Education and Training Reform Regulations (VRQA).*

The Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority (VRQA) requires that Catholic schools are reviewed every four to five years to ensure that schools are meeting the minimum standards for registration. This review is conducted by the CEOB under the terms of the Catholic Education Commission Victoria (CECV) memorandum of understanding with the VRQA. Schools also assess and attest annually that they are meeting the VRQA standards.

See *DOBCEL School Improvement Policy 2020*

See *Guide to the Minimum Standards and Other Requirements for School Registration (Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority).*

### Responsibilities

In monitoring and auditing master facilities planning, risk management and review of VRQA minimum standards, schools and CEB have responsibilities.

### Schools

Each school is required to:

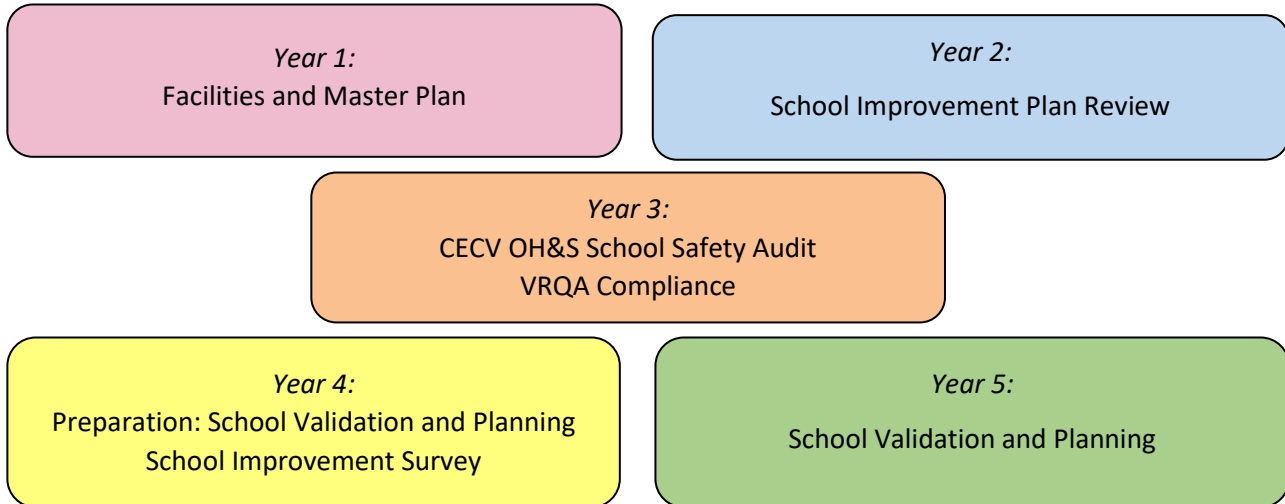
- review and monitor policies and practices consistent with diocesan, government and community requirements and expectations
- work collaboratively with the CEB in the elements of the School Improvement and Accountability Schedule
- continually demonstrate exemplary levels in implementing and maintaining the VRQA minimum standards
- ensure effective stewardship of the finances, environmental and physical resources meet the needs and enhance the learning outcomes of all students
- align budgets to school and system priorities
- maintain and develop the environmental and physical resources to meet changing educational requirements and safety standards
- regularly inform Catholic Education Ballarat on progress and challenges in relation to effective stewardship
- be aware of their responsibilities and take the necessary steps to act on any recommendations following an audit process

## **Support from Catholic Education Ballarat**

Catholic Education Ballarat will:

- implement and review processes and outcomes of the School Improvement Framework;
- provide timely communication and support to schools regarding their participation in specific components of School Improvement;
- to review compliance of schools with VRQA Minimum Standards every five years and provide feedback and follow up to the principal and governing authority as required
- report to the Catholic Education Commission of Victoria and to VRQA on the review of minimum standards;
- provide advice to school on the implementation of School Improvement Framework through website resources and CEB personnel;
- provide professional development that assists schools in building capacity for effective leadership processes in monitoring and auditing resources and policies if requested;
- assist schools in the efficient and effective management of their resources through targeted support;
- report to the Catholic Education Commission of Victoria and to State and Australian Governments the audited Annual Financial Statement of each school.

## Schedule for School Improvement and Accountability 2019-2023



	Cohort A	Cohort B	Cohort C	Cohort D	Cohort E
<b>No rth ern</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SSMJ, Horsham</li> <li>• St Mary's Ararat</li> <li>• St Patrick's Stawell</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• St Joseph's Hopetoun</li> <li>• St Mary's Sea Lake</li> <li>• St Patrick's St Arnaud</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sacred Heart Mildura</li> <li>• St Paul's Mildura</li> <li>• St Joseph's Red Cliffs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• OLHC, Murtoa</li> <li>• St Patrick's Nhill</li> <li>• OLSH, Merbein</li> <li>• St Mary's W'beal</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• St Mary's Swan Hill</li> <li>• St Mary's Robinvale</li> <li>• St Joseph's Charlton</li> <li>• St Mary's Donald</li> </ul>
<b>Ce ntr al</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• St Augustine's Creswick</li> <li>• St Joseph's Coleraine</li> <li>• St Brendan's Dunnstown</li> <li>• St Mary's Clarke's Hill</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• St Aloysius Redan</li> <li>• St Brigid's Ballan</li> <li>• Emmaus Mt Clear</li> <li>• St Michael's Daylesford</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• St Augustine's Maryborough</li> <li>• St Alipius Ballarat East</li> <li>• St James Sebastopol</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• St Francis Xavier Balrt East</li> <li>• Lumen Christi Delacombe</li> <li>• St Thomas More Alfredton</li> <li>• Siena, Lucas</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• OLHC Wendouree</li> <li>• St Patrick's, Ballarat</li> <li>• St Columba's Ballarat Nth</li> </ul>
<b>So uth ern</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• St Malachy's Edenhope</li> <li>• St Joseph's Coleraine</li> <li>• Sacred Heart Casterton</li> <li>• St Patrick's Port Fairy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• St Mary's Hamilton</li> <li>• St Patrick's Koroit</li> <li>• OLHC East Warrnambool</li> <li>• St Thomas' Terang</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• St Pius Warrnambool West</li> <li>• St Joseph's Warrnambool</li> <li>• St Mary's Colac</li> <li>• St Patrick's Camperdown</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• St John's Dennington</li> <li>• St Joseph's Penshurst</li> <li>• St Colman's Mortlake</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sacred Heart Colac</li> <li>• St Brendan's Coragulac</li> <li>• All Saints Portland</li> </ul>
<b>Sec on dar y</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monivae College Hamilton</li> <li>• Loreto College Ballarat</li> <li>• <i>St Patrick's College, Ballarat</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Damascus College Ballarat</li> <li>• St Joseph's College, Mildura</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• MRC Camperdown</li> <li>• Emmanuel College, Warrnambool</li> <li>• <i>Marian College Ararat</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Trinity College Colac</li> <li>• MacKillop College Swan Hill</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• St Brigid's College, Horsham</li> </ul>

2019	Facilities and Master Plan	School Validation & Planning	Preparation: School Validation & Planning SI Survey	CECV OH&S School Safety Audit VRQA Compliance ECSI Surveys	School Improvement Plan Review SI Survey
2020	School Improvement Plan Review SI Survey	Facilities and Master Plan	School Validation & Planning	Preparation: School Validation & Planning SI Survey	CECV OH&S School Safety Audit VRQA Compliance ECSI Surveys
2021	CECV OH&S School Safety Audit VRQA Compliance ECSI Surveys	School Improvement Plan Review SI Survey	Facilities and Master Plan	School Validation & Planning	Preparation: School Validation & Planning SI Survey

2022	Preparation: School Validation & Planning SI Survey	CECV OH&S School Safety Audit VRQA Compliance ECSI Surveys	School Improvement Plan Review SI Survey	Facilities and Master Plan	School Validation & Planning
2023	School Validation & Planning	Preparation: School Validation & Planning SI Survey	CECV OH&S School Safety Audit VRQA Compliance ECSI Surveys	School Improvement Plan Review SI Survey	Facilities and Master Plan

## TEMPLATES AND RESOURCES

Templates and resources are available via the SIMON e-Sort portal.

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