

WALKING TOGETHER

A Framework for Partnership
in Mission for the Catholic
Parishes and Schools of the
Diocese of Parramatta



DIOCESE of
PARRAMATTA



Catholic Schools
Parramatta Diocese



“ Whether we are pastors, principals, leaders, teachers, parents, guardians, or students, we have been called to accompany one another on the journey to wholeness and to lead our learning communities to become critical yeast in critical times.¹ ”

BISHOP VINCENT LONG OFM CONV
BISHOP OF PARRAMATTA





¹ Speech by Bishop Vincent Long, CSPD System Leaders and Clergy Symposium, November 2022

FOREWORD



Whether we are pastors, principals, leaders, teachers, parents, guardians, or students, we have been called to accompany one another on the journey to wholeness and to lead our learning communities to become critical yeast in critical times.

This foundational document outlines a frame of reference for how we can respond to this call. It is both instructive and formative in its discussion of the shared mission of parish and school communities.

It has been developed in a synodal manner. Attentive to the past, it began with the foundations of the Pastor and the Catholic School document that was developed in 2003 and has served us well in the past. The process then saw us engage in six months of consultation involving over 200 school and parish leaders from across the Diocese. This period of listening and discernment led to some important additions and adjustments that speak to our current context.

This document is now well placed to guide us as we seek to continue to build strong bonds of partnerships between parishes and schools as part of our broader Diocesan Catholic faith community. We can see multiple applications for its use, such as being a reference for the ongoing review of relevant CSPD and Diocesan policies and as a resource for the induction and formation of newly appointed parish and school leaders. It could also be used as a guide for navigating local school-parish partnership projects as they emerge in the future.

It is highly significant that our CSPD Board has played a key role in the instigation of this process of renewal. This is evidence of their strong commitment to maintaining the strong Catholic identity and mission of our CSPD school communities.

We offer this document to parishes and schools to be used as a vital resource for learning and formation so that we can be animated together in our shared mission, clear on the current strengths, future possibilities and appropriate limitations of parish and school partnerships.

Most Reverend Vincent Long Van Nguyen OFM Conv STL DD
BISHOP OF THE DIOCESE OF PARRAMATTA

Elizabeth Crouch AM
CSPD BOARD CHAIR



BACKGROUND

THE DIOCESE OF PARRAMATTA

Acknowledgement

The Diocese of Parramatta is located on Darug and Gundungurra land. We recognise the traditional custodians of this land and pay our respects to elders past, present, and emerging. The Diocese is also committed to Reconciliation with First Nations peoples.

History of Catholic Education in the Diocese

The history of Catholic schooling in Western Sydney and the Blue Mountains shows that a close partnership has existed between the clergy and the laity, enabling education to flourish. In 1820, Fr John Therry, under the guidance of layperson George Marley, laid the foundation for this partnership by founding Australia's first Catholic school in Parramatta. This marked the beginning of a story where the clergy and laity have worked to ensure access for students to Catholic education.

The year 1875 saw a significant development as the Marist Brothers took charge of the Parramatta school. This transition occurred in the wake of the Education Acts in the colonies, which prompted the arrival of Religious Orders to Australia, safeguarding the continuity of Catholic education. Meanwhile, St Matthew's Primary School in Windsor, established in 1832, underwent a similar journey. Led by lay teachers from 1835 to 1882, the school later benefited from the stewardship of the Good Samaritan Sisters, who carried forward the pioneering work of their predecessors.

Today, St Matthew's Primary School stands as a testament to this enduring tradition, preserving its rich heritage on the original site as one of Australia's oldest Catholic educational institutions. Each Catholic school in the Diocese bears a similar narrative, characterised by collaboration, tradition, and the unique charism of religious orders and parishes. This rich history continues to evolve, with new schools emerging in rapidly growing areas of Western Sydney, ensuring that the legacy of Catholic education remains vibrant and relevant for generations to come.

Today, over 46,000 students are educated across over 80 schools covering pre-school to post-school learning, drawing on 200 years of history and experience of Catholic Education in Western Sydney.

Australian Catholic Schools Today

It is important to note that Australian Catholic schools began as parochial schools supported by the strong leadership of parish clergy and religious orders and funded by the generous donations of parishioners. Today, Australian Catholic schools are vital Diocesan ministries supported by and accountable for significant government funding and school fees paid by parents. They are led by Catholic education staff and play a central role in the mission of each Australian Diocese.





Our Diocesan Journey

Since the creation of the Diocese of Parramatta in 1986, the Diocese, through its bishops, parishes, schools, and lay faithful, has sought to accompany people from all walks of life living within the Diocese as they embark on their particular life journeys.

There are over 120 priests in the Diocese of Parramatta, with 21 priestly religious orders. The profile of the clergy reflects both renewal and transition. The Diocese benefits from the presence of many very experienced, albeit often overstretched, clergy who lead parishes. In the next few years, some of the priests will likely move into retirement. The recent ordination of younger priests has injected dynamism into the ministry, while an increasing number of clergy from diverse cultural backgrounds serve to enrich the Church's perspectives.

The Diocese of Parramatta respects and values the religious, cultural and socio-economic diversity of its communities. The religious diversity includes a strong presence of Eastern Catholic rites. The Diocese is also in dialogue with other Christian denominations, religious belief systems and non-religious worldviews.

In a pivotal move following the Governance Review in 2022, the Bishop of Parramatta established a Board of Directors for Catholic education, known as Catholic Schools Parramatta Diocese Ltd (CSPDL). This governance restructure underscores a commitment to effective stewardship and strategic leadership in navigating the evolving landscape of Catholic education in Western Sydney and the Blue Mountains.

As parishes and school leaders navigate these changes, collaboration, innovation, and a united commitment to the mission of Catholic education will guide the journey forward. This will ensure that Catholic schools work closely with parishes to remain vibrant centres of faith, learning, and community.

In 2023, the Diocese of Parramatta held its first-ever Synod, and was the first local Synod following the 5th Plenary Council in Australia, where the people of God gathered to discuss important matters relating to the life and Mission of the Church. In January 2023, the Diocese embarked on a two-year journey to embrace synodality, aligning with Pope Francis's vision and led locally by Bishop Vincent for the Church in Western Sydney and the Blue Mountains. This initiative aimed to discern the Holy Spirit's guidance in revealing pastoral needs and deepening communion, participation, and mission within the Church. It came to fruition in 2024 with the development and launch of the Diocese of Parramatta's Pastoral Plan for a Synodal Church (2024-2028) titled, *Behold I am with you always* (Matthew 28:20). This Pastoral Plan² honours the synodal journey of the Diocese and hopes to inspire local action and equip individuals to engage in the Church's mission, spreading the Gospel message within and beyond the Diocese.

The Pastoral Plan identifies six objectives that are illustrated in Figure 1 overleaf.

² Diocese of Parramatta, Diocesan Pastoral Plan for a Synodal Church (2024: 13)

Figure 1 **OBJECTIVES OF THE DIOCESAN PASTORAL PLAN³**

The Pastoral Plan states that these objectives cannot be separated from each other and are all integral to our faith and community life lived in mission. It also states that to achieve these objectives, five priorities have been identified:

- Prayer
- Mission
- Formation
- Listening, dialogue and discernment
- Community⁴

These objectives and priorities will shape the call for the ongoing partnership between parish and school communities within the Diocese to be a significant expression of a synodal church. Parish and school communities are called to walk together, listen to each other, embrace the diversity of gifts within their communities, and be prayerfully guided by the Holy Spirit to respond together in the shared mission of the Catholic Church.



In Matthew 28:20, *Behold I am with you always*, we are reassured of the constant presence of Jesus. As members of his Church and guided by the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:16), we are challenged to renew our commitment to create an environment of stewardship and inclusivity by ensuring that all are supported by those who are working towards the mission of Jesus and his Church. With this in mind, this framework for partnership for the Parishes and Schools of the Diocese of Parramatta calls for us to act with charity, tolerance, respect and integrity. We establish this document to reflect our commitment to living out the Gospel values through the shared mission of the parish and the school.

³ Taken from the Diocese of Parramatta, Diocesan Pastoral Plan for a Synodal Church (2024: 14)

⁴ Diocese of Parramatta, Diocesan Pastoral Plan for a Synodal Church (2024: 14)





“ Today’s societies are characterised by a multicultural and multireligious composition...
The history of Catholic schools is characterised by welcoming pupils from different
cultural backgrounds and religious affiliations.

*In this context, “what is required [...] is courageous and innovative fidelity to one’s
pedagogical vision”...to bear witness, to know and to dialogue with diversity.⁵* ”

The Nature and Purpose of this Document

This foundational document aims to reaffirm and strengthen the relationship between parishes and schools, and to support parish and school leaders in cooperating and working effectively together to educate students holistically. There are many aspects of Mission where the parish and the school have shared responsibilities. This document addresses clergy, system leaders, principals, their leadership teams, and future leaders. It outlines guiding principles for effective shared Mission in education and details key areas of interest for effective collaboration between parishes and schools.

This document now replaces the earlier documents, namely “*Catholic Education Pastors and Principals in Partnership*”, Diocese of Parramatta, May 2001 and “*The Pastor and the Catholic School*”, Diocese of Parramatta, May, 2003.

A Shared Mission

“Education is integral to the mission of the Church to proclaim the Good News. First and foremost, every Catholic educational institution is a place to encounter the living God who in Jesus Christ reveals his transforming love and truth.”⁶

In this way, the Catholic schools of the Diocese of Parramatta share a common mission with the parishes of the Diocese and all Diocesan ministries. This shared mission calls for partnership and collaboration ensuring that initiatives align with the Church’s teachings on justice, human dignity and the common good. This Parramatta Diocesan Pastoral Plan (2024-2028) encourages the ongoing development of this partnership by naming foundational principles that include: calling for a synodal church that helps the people of God walk forward together, embracing the diversity of gifts and charisms of all, and promoting a communal search in the way forward when making ecclesial decisions.⁷

⁵ Dicastery for Catholic Education, *The Identity of the Catholic School in a Culture of Dialogue* (2022:27)

⁶ Pope Benedict XVI, *Address to Catholic Educators*, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, Rome, 2008

⁷ Diocese of Parramatta, *Diocesan Pastoral Plan for a Synodal Church* (2024: 11)

The Role of Parents

“ Parents have a particularly important part to play in the educating community since it is to them that primary and natural responsibility for their children’s education belongs.”⁸ ”

The Diocese of Parramatta respects “the primary right of parents to educate their children” and the understanding that “the family is a community of love and solidarity, which is uniquely suited to teach and transmit cultural, ethical, social, spiritual and religious values.”⁹ The Diocese recognises the family as each child’s first and most influential educator and is committed to partnering actively with parents and carers, encouraging open communication, supportive learning environments and active participation in school and parish communities.

The Role of Clergy

The leadership of clergy is an integral support for the faith, life and mission of each school community. This partnership is expressed in many ways, from local clergy leading liturgical celebrations, being a presence in learning spaces, collaborating with teachers and students, and through their important contribution to school and Diocesan education initiatives and events. This document invites this partnership to flourish and creates space for initiatives to grow in response to local opportunities.

Primary and Secondary Schools

It is important to note that Primary Catholic schools often have more extensive opportunities for partnership with their local parish than our Secondary schools do, that are regionally based and often connected to multiple local parish communities. Nonetheless, students in Secondary schools are maturing into young adults and need the support of local parish communities to encourage and nurture their formation. Therefore, while different, opportunities for partnership between Secondary Catholic schools and local parishes and clergy are highly valued.

Each Secondary school community in the Diocese of Parramatta has a designated Coordinating Pastor. This is normally the clergy leader from the parish where the school resides, unless otherwise nominated by the Episcopal Vicar for Education. The Coordinating Pastor takes the primary responsibility for engaging with the Secondary school, as well as liaising with the clergy from all of the parishes of the students in the Secondary school community as needed.



⁸ Congregation for Catholic Education, Catholic Schools on the Threshold of the Third Millennium, Holy See, 1998

⁹ Vatican, The Charter of the Rights of the Family, 1983





The Role of the Parish

Local parish communities play a vital and foundational role in supporting the faith formation of individuals and families. The parish is intergenerational and available to accompany a person throughout life.

Parish clergy play a vital leadership role in the parish, often advised by a Parish Pastoral Council on the pastoral care of the parish and supported by an administrative and pastoral team, as well as an array of volunteers from within the parish.

The Role of Parish Pastoral Councils

Parish Pastoral Councils are made up of representatives from the parish community who share a common desire to serve their local church community. As a consultative group, the Council assists the Parish Priest in his pastoral ministry by providing advice and recommendations on a variety of parish matters, such as engaging youth and young families, worship and evangelisation, social justice, service, or fundraising.

The Ministries of the Diocese

The Diocesan Catholic faith community goes beyond the pews. It includes a network of Catholic agencies and institutions that support the mission of the Church. Each agency exists to continue Christ's work in the community. From schools that ignite young minds with knowledge and love for Christ, to hospitals that heal with compassion, aged care facilities that embrace wisdom, and welfare organisations that show the face of Christ to all those in need.



CANONICAL AND CIVIL GOVERNANCE



“ For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished. ”

MATTHEW 5:18

In our commitment to uphold the values of the Catholic Church while functioning within the broader societal framework, the Diocese acknowledges the vital role of both canon and civil law in effective governance. These legal frameworks provide the foundation to ensuring that we adhere to our religious principles while respecting the laws of the land.

Canon law, the body of laws and regulations developed or adopted by Church authority, serves as the cornerstone of our governance and pastoral care. It provides the framework within which the Diocese and its agencies/ministries operates, guiding our actions in accordance with the teachings and traditions of the Catholic Church. Equally important is our adherence to civil law, which governs our interactions with the secular world. Compliance with civil regulations ensures that we operate within legal boundaries, particularly in areas such as employment, financial management, and public safety.

The Diocesan Chancery

At the heart of the mission of the Diocese is the Chancery, the administrative arm responsible for the smooth operation and governance of Diocesan affairs led by the Bishop. The Diocesan Chancery, as a ministry of service to the Diocese, Agencies and Parishes, oversees essential functions such as financial and administrative management, and hence plays a pivotal role in listening, discerning and formulating actions that reflect the Diocese's commitment to effective governance and wellbeing of its Diocesan community.

The Vicars General and the Episcopal Vicar for Education, play particularly significant leadership roles in the Diocesan Chancery in support of the Bishop.

The Catholic Schools Parramatta Diocese Board

The Bishop established a company in 2023 to conduct the provision of Catholic education across the Parramatta Diocese. The company is named Catholic Schools Parramatta Diocese Limited (CSPDL). The Bishop and the Trustees of the Roman Catholic Church for the Diocese of Parramatta have the power and right, at civil law and canon law, to appoint and dismiss directors to the board of the company (the Board) pursuant to the Constitution of the company.

The appointed Board Directors are responsible, subject to the Corporations Act and the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act, for the strategic and operational performance of the company related to the provision of Catholic education across the Parramatta Diocese. This includes the operation of CSPD schools, the hiring of appropriate staff and the financial management of the organisation.



It is significant to note that the Episcopal Vicar for Education is a member of the Board. This recognises the importance of the partnership between the Chancery and the Board.

Pursuant to the objects outlined in the Catholic Schools Parramatta Diocese Constitution the company exists:

- a) to carry on or assist in the carrying on and the promotion of the educational mission of the Church through the Catholic schools of the Diocese of Parramatta;
- b) to govern, conduct and administer the Catholic schools of the Diocese of Parramatta providing Catholic education for Primary and Secondary students and;
- c) to govern, conduct and administer support services for the Catholic Primary and Secondary schools of the Diocese of Parramatta.

Further, as defined in the Constitution, CSPDL, in advancing education and religion, shall at all times and in all ways conduct all its apostolic and charitable activities consistent with the beliefs, teaching and legislation of the Church.

Key Responsibilities Regarding the Employment of School Staff

For the recruitment of senior school leaders (Principals, Assistant Principals, and Religious Education Coordinators) in CSPD schools, Parish clergy are highly valued participants as selection panel members. The panel will arrive at a recommendation for the Chief Executive Officer. CSPD leaders greatly appreciate the contribution of Parish Clergy to these significant decisions for school communities.

Policies in relation to Ecclesiastical Goods for Incorporated Entities

Any policies in relation to ecclesiastical goods (e.g. property) are governed also by canon law. Canon 1284 §2, obliges the administrators of ecclesiastical goods “to ensure that the ownership of ecclesiastical goods is safeguarded in ways which are valid in civil law”.

For the purposes of civil law, the ecclesiastical goods of the Diocese are held in the name of The Trustees of the Roman Catholic Church for the Diocese of Parramatta. This body corporate, whose members are the Bishop and the College of Consultors, is the registered proprietor of the property. The Trustees of the Roman Catholic Church for the Diocese of Parramatta alone has the authority to act in respect of the property in civil law.

With the establishment of CDPSL as a company limited by guarantee, for the governance of Diocesan apostolic works or activities, the assets of the Diocese transferred to the company initially, as well as any assets subsequently acquired by the company, are regarded as ecclesiastical goods. The company governing the apostolic work or activity does have the authority to make decisions regarding the acquisition, administration, and alienation of its assets. Notwithstanding, the norms of canon law apply to the company in regard to its assets in the manner provided for in the Company Constitution and the relevant bylaws. Policies pertaining to certain matters in relation to ecclesiastical goods as per the relevant bylaws will require the Board to seek the endorsement of the Member before it comes into effect.

It is the Trustees of the Roman Catholic Church for the Diocese of Parramatta who then execute in civil law the decisions that also align with the requirements of canon law.

In all decisions relating to ecclesiastical goods, the CSPDL Board and the Trustees of the Roman Catholic Church for the Diocese of Parramatta are committed to processes of consultation, dialogue and discernment with school and parish communities where these decisions can have an impact on these communities current ministry and/or future development. This would particularly involve engagement with Parish Clergy and School Principals as well as the broader parish and school communities when appropriate.

In doing so, the CSPDL Board and the Trustees of the Roman Catholic Church for the Diocese of Parramatta will be attentive to the reality that, in most cases, the Parish communities purchased the property that makes up the Parish site.

Governance Guidelines for Parish Clergy

The rights and duties of Parish Clergy in relation to the parish Primary school and, if applicable, the regional Secondary school in which they have parishioners as students, possess foundation in the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council in its Declaration on Christian Education, *Gravissimum Educationis* (28 October 1965). It states:

*“This Sacred Council of the Church earnestly entreats pastors and all the faithful to spare no sacrifice in helping Catholic schools fulfill their function in a continually more perfect way, and especially in caring for the needs of those who are poor in the goods of this world or who are deprived of the assistance and affection of a family or who are strangers to the gift of Faith (n 9).”*¹⁰

It is noted that the basis for the parish community’s (parish priest, assistant priest, parish leadership team, parishioners, parents and carers, and teachers) involvement in its parish school arises less from its authority but rather than from its duty of pastoral care.

On 28th December 1997, the (then) Congregation For Catholic Education issued *The Catholic School On The Threshold Of The Third Millennium* which reinforced the teaching that the Catholic school cannot be understood outside the context of the whole Church:

*“By reason of its identity, therefore, the Catholic school is a place of ecclesial experience, which is moulded in the Christian community. However, it should not be forgotten that the school fulfils its vocation to be a genuine experience of Church only if it takes its stand within the organic pastoral work of the Christian community. In a very special way the Catholic school affords the opportunity to meet young people in an environment which favours their Christian formation (n 12).”*¹¹



Again, in recent times, the same Congregation reiterated this ecclesial message in its *Instruction on The Identity of the Catholic School for a Culture of Dialogue*, 25th January 2022:

*“The Catholic identity of schools justifies their inclusion in the life of the Church, even in their institutional specificity. And all the more, the fact that Catholic schools are part of the Church’s mission “is a proper and specific attribute, a distinctive characteristic which penetrates and informs every moment of its educational activity, a fundamental part of its very identity and the focus of its mission”. Consequently, the Catholic school “takes its stand within the organic pastoral work of the Christian community” (n 21).”*¹²

¹⁰ https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decl_19651028_gravissimum-educationis_en.html

¹¹ https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccatheduc/documents/rc_con_ccatheduc_doc_27041998_school2000_en.html

¹² https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccatheduc/documents/rc_con_ccatheduc_doc_20220125_istruzione-identita-scuola-cattolica_en.html#_ftnref26





Practically speaking, the Instruction was prudent in this caution:

“Problems can arise within the local Church as a result of differences of opinions among the members of the community (Bishop, parish priest, consecrated persons, parents, school leaders, associations, etc.) concerning the viability of the school, its financial sustainability and its position in the face of new educational challenges. Once again, dialogue and walking together are the main way to resolve these problems, while also keeping in mind the hierarchical nature of the Church and respecting the different competencies (n 82).”

Here mentioned are both the synodal and hierarchical ways of each of the faithful’s baptismal calling to be priest, prophet and king.

The Code of Canon Law reinforces this mindset, where both the diocesan bishop and the parish priest are enablers of Catholic education, as in Canon 794 §2:

“Pastors of souls have the duty of arranging everything so that all the faithful have a Catholic education.”

The obligations of the Parish Clergy are set out in Canon 528 §1, which says, inter alia, that,

“The Pastor is obliged to take special care for the Catholic education of children and young adults.”

The Parish Priest’s authority in the parish, of which the school is a major part, is linked to that of the Diocesan bishop, with whom the priest shares in the sacred mission, as expressed in Canon 519:

“The pastor is the proper pastor of the parish entrusted to him, exercising the pastoral care of the community committed to him under the authority of the diocesan bishop in whose ministry of Christ he has been called to share, so that for that same community he carries out the functions of teaching, sanctifying, and governing, also with the cooperation of other presbyters or deacons and with the assistance of lay members of the Christian faithful, according to the norm of law.”

Governance Guidelines for School Principals

The Congregation for Education's Instruction on *The Identity of the Catholic School for a Culture of Dialogue* sets the Principal's responsibility in ecclesial terms:



"In accordance with the canonical norms concerning Catholic schools, it is the responsibility of the school leadership to collaborate with the entire school community and in close dialogue with the pastors of the Church. This in order to make explicit, along with the official educational project, the guidelines on the school's educational mission. Indeed, every official act of the school must be in accordance with its Catholic identity, while fully respecting the freedom of each person's conscience... The ecclesial nature of Catholic schools, which is inscribed in the very heart of their identity as schools, is the reason for the institutional link they keep with the Church hierarchy." (n 49-50)."¹³

The "official educational project" can be interpreted as the Principal complying with all civil law (e.g. NSW Education Act, 1990) regulations, Child Protection, Workplace Health and Safety and being subject to other bodies overseeing education, such as Catholic Schools Parramatta Diocese Ltd (CSPDL).

The canonical norm which reinforces this is found in Canon 22:

"Civil laws to which the law of the Church yields are to be observed in canon law with the same effects, insofar as they are not contrary to divine law and unless canon law provides otherwise."

To the Instruction's caution about resolving differences can be added this further advice for all obliged in solutions to challenging issues. This references Pope St John XXIII's Encyclical *Ad Petri Cathedram*, (29th June 1959):

"The echo of this attitude resounds already in the first encyclical of John XXIII, where it is stated that 'The Catholic Church [...] leaves many questions open to [...] discussion'. In this sense, whether a case necessarily requires direct intervention on the part of the church authority must make the object of careful consideration, since "the common saying, expressed in various ways and attributed to various authors, must be recalled with approval: 'in essentials, unity; in doubtful matters, liberty; in all things, charity' (n 85)."

¹³ Ibid.



Parish and School Communities in Partnership

GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR A SHARED MISSION

A Catholic school requires the ongoing cooperation of parents, students, teaching staff, priests, Catholic Schools Parramatta Diocese Ltd, and the Bishop of the Diocese. The schools are funded by the Federal and State governments and the local contribution of fees paid by the families. In taking forward the Mission of Catholic education, at the local level, the leadership of the pastor and principal is vital. Given the centrality of this relationship, this document attempts to provide some guiding principles for this work.”¹⁴

(ADAPTED FROM *THE PASTOR AND THE SCHOOL*, 2003).

GUIDING PRINCIPLE 1: **The People of God Walking Together** **- A Shared Mission of Partnership**

In contemporary Catholic schools, pastors and principals exercise their distinctive responsibilities as leaders who have a shared mission to create schools which are both centres of learning and centres of evangelisation. This is a mission of bringing faith and culture into harmony.

N26. “The parish is not an outdated institution precisely because it possesses great flexibility, it can assume quite different contours depending on the openness and missionary creativity of the pastor and the community.” The Parish Priest is entrusted by the bishop with the pastoral care of the parish (c. 515 §1). The school is an important evangelising arm of the parish.

The laity, who staff the school, play an active part in the life and activity of the Church, their activity is so necessary that without it the apostolate of the pastors is generally unable to achieve its full effectiveness. The Catholic school, in addition to pursuing “cultural goals and the human formation of youth”, consists in creating “for the school community a special atmosphere animated by the Gospel spirit of freedom and charity”.

In this way, the Catholic school prepares pupils to exercise their freedom responsibly, forming an attitude of openness and solidarity. The principal leads staff to develop a collective expression of and participation in the shared mission, within the local community.



¹⁴ Adapted from “The Pastor & the Catholic School”, CSPD, 2003.

GUIDING PRINCIPLE 2:
In Partnership with Parents

The Church refers to the family as the domestic church, and parents taking responsibility for educating their children in faith. The Catholic schools provide significant support to parents and carers in fulfilling this responsibility, particularly through the Religious Education program. This is complemented by the religious formation of the children in the parish. It is the parish that is the place of sacramental initiation, of regular worship, catechesis and service.

Therefore, it is necessary to foster initiatives which encourage commitment, but which provide at the same time the right sort of concrete support which the family needs and which involve it in the Catholic school's educational project. The constant aim of the school, therefore, should be listening and dialogue with the students' families. This can be encouraged through the promotion of parents' groups, in order to clarify their indispensable collaboration into a synodal approach needed for a Catholic educational project to be efficacious.



The consultations involved in developing this document revealed recommendations from school and parish leaders for further guidance in terms of:

- i. how Catholic parish and Catholic school communities contribute to their shared mission
- ii. recommended shared commitments and strategies for developing the partnership between parish and school communities, and
- iii. recommended behaviours for Catholic parish and school leaders that foster effective partnership.

This further guidance is offered in the following three tables which are recommended for parish and school leaders to use as a guide for shared reflection to help identify the current strengths of their parish and school partnership to be affirmed and supported, as well as ideas for further strengthening of the partnership in the future.



How the Catholic Parish and the Catholic School Contribute to this Shared Mission

Under the authority of the Diocesan bishop, the Parish Priest carries out for his community the duties of teaching, sanctifying, and governing in the parish, with the cooperation of other priests or deacons and the lay Christian faithful.¹⁵

A Catholic Parish is a community of baptised people. While place of residence is still the general norm for deciding the composition of the community, Parish Priests may also include those who choose to become part of a community even though they live elsewhere.

The Parish Priest recognises the Principal of the Catholic Parish Primary School and the Principal of a Regional Catholic Secondary School as the appointed leader of the school community. As the school is the primary means through which one of the Parish Priest's key responsibilities is fulfilled, he works collaboratively with the Principal, Staff, School Advisory Boards, and Parent Groups for the common good of the Church and its mission.

The Catholic School promotes practical approaches to living the evangelising mission in education. Where a parish has a school, the Parish Priest values and supports it for the role it plays in the education of the young, one of his principal responsibilities.¹⁶

Catholic school enrolment policy gives priority to Catholics. They are also open to all students and families who support the Catholic ethos.¹⁸ Catholic schools continue to be a choice for many families for a variety of reasons, many of which are not religious. They also continue to be a choice for families of other Religious traditions. These families know and understand that Catholic schools teach Catholic Religious Education and offer a range of Catholic formation experiences.

The Catholic Parish and the Catholic School share a co-responsibility for:

- maintaining and enhancing the Catholic identity of the school community through the ongoing formation of staff and students, the delivery of a high-quality Religious Education curriculum, and offering meaningful and appropriate prayer and liturgy
- accompanying students on their faith journey, giving them guidance so they know that they are loved, understood, and listened to
- promoting the pastoral unity of the school and the parish
- ensuring the culture of the school is one of welcome and inclusion for all students and their families
- being attentive to and respectful of this religious diversity when it is present in a Catholic school community
- modelling the Gospel values of hope, mercy, and forgiveness and committing to the preferential option for the poor and marginalised
- demonstrating personal integrity and witness to foster a culture of service
- modelling prayer as critical to personal development and faith
- actively nourishing the faith life of the Catholic School community by providing regular opportunities for prayer and liturgical celebrations - this includes Catholic Schools inviting the local Parish Priest to co-plan and lead liturgical celebrations and to be involved in all important school events where possible.

¹⁵ Can. 519

¹⁶ Can. 528 §1, c. 776

¹⁸ Framing Paper, Religious Education in Australian Schools, NCEC, 2017

TABLE 1 RECOMMENDED SHARED COMMITMENTS AND STRATEGIES FOR DEVELOPING THE PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN PARISH AND SCHOOL COMMUNITIES

| A Shared Commitment to: | Supported by Strategies such as: |
|--|--|
| <p>SYNODALITY</p> <p>Requires listening, discerning, dialogue, and witness (synodality shares constitutive elements of subsidiarity, solidarity and stewardship).</p> | <p>Regular dialogue - and prayerful discernment - seeking always to listen and understand the other perspectives and to avoid making assumptions.</p> <p>Being open to the guidance of the Holy Spirit through a commitment to prayer in decision-making.</p> |
| <p>SUBSIDIARITY</p> <p>Situating decision-making as close to those impacted as possible, through engaging with those impacted by the decisions.</p> | <p>A sincere intent to involve all relevant people in the decision-making irrespective of their position or power - possibly in a consultation, or as part of a committee. Also important is the respect for each person and understanding of the gifts all can contribute.</p> <p>In this way we share their journey, seek to provide support, and learn from one another.¹⁹</p> |
| <p>SOLIDARITY</p> <p>Standing shoulder to shoulder with others, especially those experiencing poverty, disadvantage, or vulnerability.</p> | <p>Leaders recognise the rights of the marginalised in society, the neglected, the hurt, the poor and challenge the community to respond to their needs to provide welcome, inclusion and practical assistance.</p> |
| <p>CO-RESPONSIBILITY</p> <p>A synodal church is a church of participation and co-responsibility. (ref. Pope Francis).</p> <p>The realisation that all baptised Christians share in the priesthood of Christ helps to strengthen a sense of vocation in school leaders and deepens an appreciation of their capacity to nurture the faith of all members of an authentically Catholic community.</p> | <p>Parish and school leaders work collaboratively to make decisions and discuss important matters of mutual interest.</p> <p>Effective decision-making requires all leaders to listen to understand, check any assumptions, reflection, discussion, response, and evaluation.²⁰</p> |
| <p>STEWARDSHIP</p> <p>Stewardship is a biblical notion and requires a balanced approach to issues of the environment. Human beings have been entrusted with the earth but not to misuse it for selfish purposes.</p> | <p>Leaders work to exercise proper use of human and material resources for the care and education of students and have a deep respect for the environment. It refers also to the proper care of all the assets, held in trust for the People of God, for now and generations to come.</p> <p>Directions around civil governance procedures will be found in Diocesan policies.</p> <p>Leaders carry out these important responsibilities with integrity.</p> |

19 Pope Francis, "Fratelli Tutti", 2020, and 2021 – 22 ACBC Social Justice & Statement, "Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor".

20 Cornish, Sandie, "The Pastoral Spiral Approach", www.social-spirituality.net



TABLE 2 RECOMMENDED BEHAVIOURS FOR CATHOLIC PARISH AND SCHOOL LEADERS THAT FOSTER EFFECTIVE PARTNERSHIP

| Commitments to Partnership | Are Supported by Behaviours such as: |
|--|---|
| Mutual respect for the human dignity of every person. | Acknowledging the humanity/worth of every person, working collegially, recognising that it is not possible for a leader to do it alone. Have a tolerance for ambiguity and be able to admit to not having all the answers to complex situations. |
| Valuing a pastoral approach. | Promoting and living the Gospel values of forgiveness, hope and mercy. |
| Respecting the roles and responsibilities of the leaders. | Scheduling time and building in opportunities for the Parish and school leaders to clarify their roles and responsibilities and ways to collaborate together. |
| Clear and regular communication. | Regular, proactive schedule of meetings. Establish ways to suit individual contexts e.g. email, telephone, face-to-face meetings. Use: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • active listening and empathetic responding • being honest and frank • keeping the best interests of students at the heart of any decision • make use of humour. |
| Understanding where the appropriate locus of decision-making lies in various contexts. | Respecting the roles and responsibilities and taking the time to work through any issues or problems. Understand who will need to make the final decision. When the decision is reached, remain loyal and supportive to one another, by taking joint ownership of the decision and the reasons for it. |
| Commitment to negotiating issues as close as possible to the local level. | It is anticipated that most issues will be resolved at a local level. Where this cannot happen, the matter will be referred to the Vicar for Education and/or the Chief Executive Officer. |
| Commitment and adherence to relevant Diocesan policies. | With the appointment of the CSPD Board there is a need for a fresh articulation of policy and for systematic implementation by all leaders, including Parish Priests, where applicable. |

RELATED POLICIES

This foundational document offers guidance for Diocesan parish and school leaders to foster their vital partnership in the shared evangelising mission of a synodal church in the context of the Diocese of Parramatta.

As a foundational document, it is offered as a source of guidance for the ongoing review and development of related policies issued by the Chancery and Catholic Schools Parramatta Diocese.

Such related policies include:

- Code of Conduct When Working with Children and Students
- CSPD Family and School Partnership Principles
- School Enrolment Policy and Enrolment Procedures
- Fraud and Corruption Framework
- Gifts and Benefits Policy
- Recruitment and Selection Policy
- Safeguarding - Facilities Procedures
- Safeguarding Procedures
- School Fees Management Internal Policy
- Suspension-transfer-and-exclusion-procedures for students
- Working Alone Procedures

For any enquiries relating to such related policies please contact:

FOR CHANCERY:

The Diocesan Head of Governance, Risk and Compliance and/or

FOR CATHOLIC SCHOOLS PARRAMATTA DIOCESE:

The Executive General Manager - Legal, Governance and Risk



APPENDIX 1: GLOSSARY OF TERMS

The following definitions are offered as these terms are directly referred to in this document or are relevant to its content.

Canon Law

Canon law, the body of laws and regulations developed or adopted by Church authority, serves as the cornerstone of our governance and pastoral care.²¹

Catholic Schools Parramatta Diocese (CSPD)

Catholic Schools Parramatta Diocese is a system of 80 Catholic Diocesan schools across the Parramatta Diocese.²²

Civil Law

Governs interactions with the broader society. Compliance with civil regulations ensures that school and parish communities operate within legal boundaries, particularly in areas such as employment, financial management, and public safety.²³

Clergy

Individuals who have received the sacrament of Holy Orders, enabling them to serve in specific ministerial roles within the Church. This group primarily includes bishops, priests, and deacons, each of whom has distinct responsibilities and functions.²⁴

Company Constitution and Bylaws

A company is an entity that has a separate legal existence from its owners. The owners of the company are known as members or shareholders.²⁵ A company constitution is a contract between the company and each member, the company and each director, the company and the company secretary, and a member and each other member.²⁶ Company bylaws are rules adopted by shareholders that govern their operation.

CSPD School Principal

A CSPD Principal (also known as a Principal Leader) is responsible to the Chief Executive Officer for the leadership of the nominated school. The Principal exercises this responsibility by ensuring that the school delivers high quality contemporary learning and teaching for the community it serves which is embedded in the Catholic world view. It is a collaborative ministry of witness and service and part of the evangelising mission of the Church.²⁷

Dogmatic Constitution

Church councils such as Lumen Gentium from the Second Vatican Council issued an authoritative teaching document. (Second Vatican Council)²⁸



21 See p9

22 Go to <https://www.parra.catholic.edu.au/>

23 See p9

24 See Catechism of the Catholic Church 1142

25 Taken from <https://asic.gov.au/for-business/small-business/starting-a-small-business-company/#what>

26 Taken from <https://asic.gov.au/for-business/registering-a-company/steps-to-register-a-company/constitution-and-replaceable-rules/>

27 Taken from the CSPD Principal Position Description 2024

28 The Diocese of Parramatta, Diocesan Pastoral Plan for a Synodal Church (2024: 58)

APPENDIX 1: GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Ecclesial

Relating to the Church and its functions, structures, and activities (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 752).²⁹

Evangelii Gaudium

An apostolic exhortation by Pope Francis, focusing on the joy of the Gospel and the call to evangelisation in the modern world (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 1).³⁰

Governance

The systems that direct and control – or govern – an organisation.³¹

Missionary Co-responsibility

The shared responsibility of all members of the Church to participate in and support its mission to spread the Gospel (Redemptoris Missio, 71).³²

Missionary Discipleship

The call for all baptised Christians to take part in spreading the Gospel and witnessing to Christ in their daily lives (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 119-121).³³

Pastor

A priest who is entrusted with the pastoral care of a specific community, typically a parish, under the authority of the diocesan bishop.³⁴

People of God

All who are baptised: laity, consecrated, and ordained. Protagonists of Mission Individuals or groups who take active and leading roles in the Church's mission of evangelisation, guided by the Holy Spirit (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 120).³⁵

Renewal

The process of revitalising the Church's life and mission, often involving personal and communal conversion and structural changes (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 26-33).³⁶

Second Vatican Council

A significant ecumenical council of the Catholic Church held from 1962 to 1965, which brought about numerous reforms and updates to Church practices and doctrines (Second Vatican Council).³⁷

Sensus Fidei

The sense of faith by the whole Church, where all the faithful discern and affirm the truths of faith (*Lumen Gentium*, 12).³⁸

²⁹ The Diocese of Parramatta, Diocesan Pastoral Plan for a Synodal Church (2024: 58)

³⁰ The Diocese of Parramatta, Diocesan Pastoral Plan for a Synodal Church (2024: 58)

³¹ <https://www.aicd.com.au/good-governance.html>

³² The Diocese of Parramatta, Diocesan Pastoral Plan for a Synodal Church (2024: 58)

³³ The Diocese of Parramatta, Diocesan Pastoral Plan for a Synodal Church (2024: 59)

³⁴ See Code of Canon Law 519

³⁵ The Diocese of Parramatta, Diocesan Pastoral Plan for a Synodal Church (2024: 59)

³⁶ The Diocese of Parramatta, Diocesan Pastoral Plan for a Synodal Church (2024: 59)

³⁷ The Diocese of Parramatta, Diocesan Pastoral Plan for a Synodal Church (2024: 59)

³⁸ The Diocese of Parramatta, Diocesan Pastoral Plan for a Synodal Church (2024: 59)





Synod of Bishops

A gathering of bishops from around the world to discuss and advise the Pope on important issues facing the Church. In the current Synod on Synodality 2021-2024, Pope Francis has expanded the work and related assemblies to include lay women and men as voting members, facilitators and theological ‘experts’.³⁹

The Parramatta Diocesan Synod

The word “synod” refers to both an event and a process. For the Diocese of Parramatta, the first Synod of 2023 was an opportunity for people from all walks of life to come together and discern how the Church can be more inclusive, participatory, and responsive to the needs of its people. Synods are transformative events that lead to renewal in the Church’s life. In the Diocese of Parramatta, the Synod has formed the foundation of our new Pastoral Plan for a Synodal Church.⁴⁰

The Parramatta Diocesan Pastoral Plan

Establishes and articulates the Christ-centred vision of our Diocese. It helps our Diocese align its efforts with the Church’s mission, meeting the changing needs of the community while staying true to its tradition and pastoral priorities.⁴¹

Theological Principles

Foundational beliefs and doctrines that underpin the Church’s teachings and pastoral activities (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 170-171).⁴²

Theology of Baptism

The study and understanding of the sacrament of baptism, its significance, and its effects on the individual and the Church (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1213-1274).⁴³

Trinitarian

Relating to the Holy Trinity - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit - and the relationships within this divine unity (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 232-267).⁴⁴

Universal and Particular

Terms referring to the Catholic Church’s nature of being universal (catholic) and present in specific local communities or dioceses (particular) (Lumen Gentium, 13, 23).⁴⁵

³⁹ The Diocese of Parramatta, Diocesan Pastoral Plan for a Synodal Church (2024: 59)

⁴⁰ Taken from <https://parracatholic.org/synodality/diocesan-synod/>

⁴¹ The Diocese of Parramatta, Diocesan Pastoral Plan for a Synodal Church (2024: 13)

⁴² The Diocese of Parramatta, Diocesan Pastoral Plan for a Synodal Church (2024: 59)

⁴³ The Diocese of Parramatta, Diocesan Pastoral Plan for a Synodal Church (2024: 59)

⁴⁴ The Diocese of Parramatta, Diocesan Pastoral Plan for a Synodal Church (2024: 59)

⁴⁵ The Diocese of Parramatta, Diocesan Pastoral Plan for a Synodal Church (2024: 59)

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