



# **A Handbook for Boards of Trustees**

**Catholic Schools Education Services  
2020**

# CATHOLIC EDUCATION IN THE ARCHDIOCESE OF WELLINGTON

'The Church has in a special way the duty and the right of educating, for it has a divine mission of helping al/ arrive at the fullness of Christian life.' **Canon 794:1**

One of the ways the Church engages in this God-given task of helping all arrive at the fullness of Christian Life is through the Catholic School system and in close collaboration with local parishes.

## Definition of a Catholic School

'The school is a Roman Catholic School in which the whole school community through the general School programme and its religious instruction and observances exercises the right to live and teach the values of Jesus Christ. These values are as expressed in the Scriptures and in the practices, worship and doctrine of the Roman Catholic Church, as determined from time-to-time by the Roman Catholic Bishop of the Archdiocese of Wellington, currently Cardinal John Dew". (PSCIA 1975)

## Cardinal's John's Vision


Every student in a Catholic school participates fully in a community of believers which is inspired by the Scriptures and nourished by the Eucharist. Teachers and all staff are Gospel witnesses who inspire, encourage and support their students to:

*"Walk the way of Jesus Christ,  
Live the life of Jesus Christ,  
And tell the truth of Jesus Christ."*

In so doing students realise their full potential as children of God within a holistic education system delivered with excellence."

You are entrusted to develop objectives and strategic goals to enable each student to:

*"Walk the way of Jesus Christ, Live the life of Jesus Christ, and tell the truth of Jesus Christ."*

A handwritten signature in blue ink, which appears to read 'John A. Dew'.

+ John A Dew

Archbishop of Wellington

April 2016

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# WHO, WHAT, WHEN AND HOW?

*As a member of a board of Trustees in a Catholic School there are four main questions that we need to consider as central that role: -*

1. What is the core purpose of a Catholic School, what is our Mission?
2. What is essentially Catholic about a Catholic School?
3. What needs to be safe-guarded, strengthened and enhanced?
4. What are our responsibilities as an integrated school under part 33 of the updated 1989 Education Act?

So essentially: -

- Do we understand our responsibilities as members of a board of trustees in a Catholic school and do we know how this shapes the vision for our Catholic faith community?
- Do we know what is central to our schools Catholic Character and what are the core purposes of our Catholic school that we need to grow and develop?
- Do we know who is part of our “team” and who we can rely on for support in our school, parish and the Archdiocese?
- Do we understand how this “Catholic vision” and responsibility permeates throughout all we do as a Catholic faith community and is reflected through how the school community lives out the “encounter with Christ” on a daily basis?

# The Catholic School: It's Purpose and Mission

## **Definition and Purpose**

- *New Zealand Catholic Schools are Integrated State Schools and covered by Part 33 of the 1989 Education Act which defines them as follows:*
- *"The school is a Roman Catholic school in which the whole school community, through the general school programme and in its religious instructions and observances exercises the right to live and teach the values of Jesus Christ. These values are expressed in the Scriptures and in the practices, worship and doctrine of the Roman Catholic Church, as determined from time to time by the Roman Catholic Bishop of the Diocese".*
- *Religious Instruction is evangelisation — it is the passing on of faith, through the ongoing establishment and support of a Christian community which lives out its faith, witnessing to the Gospel in daily actions and attitudes. It includes teaching or explaining the doctrines and practices of the faith, not only through Religious Education classes but also through the indirect teaching which occurs through role modelling and witness to Catholic values, behaviour and general Catholic life (Catholic Character).*
- *Catholic Proprietors/Bishops base their relationship with the Crown on six fundamental principles, developed at the start of the Integration discussions in 1973. These are:*
- *The right to teach, develop and implement the Catholic programme in Christian faith and living, and to follow those religious customs that are normal in the Catholic school;*
- *The right to administer staff appointments and arrange for staff composition in a manner that recognises the Catholic character of the school;*
- *The right to enrol children of Catholic parents in the first place, and in the second place, enrol the children of other parents seeking a Christian environment for the education of their children'*
- *The right to extend existing schools and build new ones to meet the demands of legitimate expansion and proven need, including schools with special purposes; e.g. catering for special educational, physical or emotional problems;*
- *The right to own the land, school buildings, ancillary educational buildings and facilities which make up the Catholic school system;*
- *The right of the Catholic community to make a tangible financial contribution towards the cost of maintaining its schools by way of fees.*

# **The School's Mission of Evangelisation**

Our school-parish communities are Eucharistic communities, places of learning, hospitality and common prayer, where the Gospel is a lived message through our “encounter with Christ”, through active celebration of the sacraments and through education in the faith.

The term "Catholic Education" refers to the life-long process of growing into a Christian consciousness and practices of Christian living. It is important that students and parents/caregivers be encouraged to participate in the life and mission of the local Church and its faith/parish communities

Although we recognise parents as the first and most important teachers for their children, it is a reality that many parents find this to be a challenge, given their own knowledge of the faith, the demands of their work and life in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

So, for many families, school has become the centre of their “life in the faith” and the place to begin and continue their growth and understanding of God’s message. This further emphasises the importance of the role of the parish/ school faith community as a witness for all.

As part of this the school/parish community regularly prays together, takes part in sacramental programmes and celebrates liturgies and masses.

The role of the parish/school community in growing that understanding of Christ's message is expected to grow in the future and collaborative long-term plans need to be to address this need.

In the light of this it is vital that school/ parish communities adopt a collaborative approach to evangelisation that has as its foundation a trusting and formative relationship between, priests, parents, students, parishioners and the staff.

# Partnership in Parish / School Faith Communities

Every Catholic school is, by definition, part of the Church, the People of God. When the Board consults or reports to its community, it must recognise that this community includes the proprietor of the school, the diocese, the deanery or pastoral area, diocesan pastoral councils and parish organisations such as parish councils.

The school's most obvious link is to the parish or parishes from which it draws its students. It is important that schools and their local parishes collaborate with and support one another. Joint school and parish celebrations of Mass and the sacraments, and school visits by the priests or pastoral leaders of the parish help forge these links.

Parish priests and parish pastoral leadership teams have a responsibility towards all their parishioners, including the students in the school. The school needs to give them every opportunity to fulfil that pastoral ministry. When appropriate, teachers and guidance personnel in the school may liaise with the parish priests of students in their care.

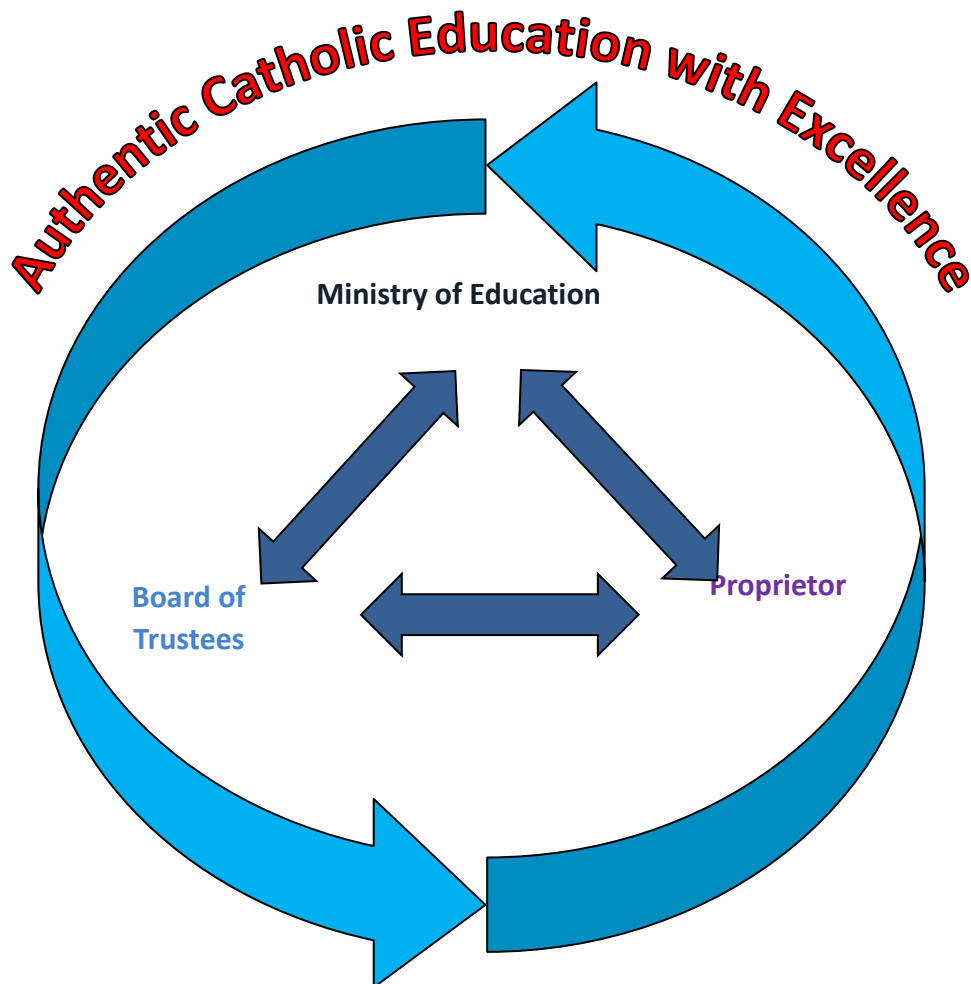
The parish priest will normally act as chaplain in a parish primary school or a regional school for which he or one of his associates has pastoral responsibility. The chaplaincy of a secondary school may be undertaken by another priest or be shared among the priests of the deanery





# Catholic Schools: A Model of a Three-way Partnership

The founding principles of integration was, when the Proprietors of Catholic schools integrated their schools with the state system of education, they entered into a partnership with the Crown and the Board of Trustees of an integrated school functions according to Part 33 of the Education Act 1989.



This is an equal partnership in which all three parties work closely together to grow and nurture our Catholic schools. When a school becomes integrated, the Proprietor and the Minister of Education approve the school's Integration Agreement. This agreement establishes a partnership between the Proprietor and the Crown. Each school has its own Integration Agreement, which outlines the conditions and legal requirements for the Board of Trustees. All Board members need to be familiar with these conditions and requirements.



# The Catholic School as a place of Educational Excellence



Level 6	The Church of the Future.
Level 5	Young people who are committed to serving God through others.
Level 4	Excellent student learning based on best teaching practice
Level 3	Excellent relationships based on policies and practices drawn from Gospel Virtues.
Level 2	Well-appointed and maintained facilities, with plans to improve them.
Level 1	A committed common belief for children, parents, staff and board.

# The Working Relationship between Principal and Board

The Principal and Board must recognise that there will be times and situations where areas of input and decision-making must be flexible.

In other words, governance and management are not always clear cut.

When these situations occur, the Principal should work closely with the Board Chairperson to negotiate appropriate measures.



## Governance

## AREA TO BE

## Management

### Board

### NEGOTIATED

### Principal



This model shows defined roles for both Board and Principal, and the area to be negotiated.

### Board

### Principal



This model may fit the time of appointment of a new Principal.

The Board has taken more responsibility than you would normally expect.

### Board

### Principal



This model may occur at the time of the Board election. There may have been a majority, or total Board turnover. The Principal takes on more responsibility.

# The Big Picture



If the Board does not have any means of looking at the big picture within the school, then it is only looking at a snapshot of what is really happening.





# What are the essential elements that make up that “Big Picture?”

- They are those aspects of Special (Catholic) Character that should be present in every school.
- They are those elements that cause people to know the school is a Catholic one.

These elements are: -



# 1. A Holistic Approach

- An approach to education which involves more than the curriculum.
- A belief that the people are essentially religious.
- We help those within our community find their place in the universe.



# 2. Gospel Virtues

- These are the virtues taught and lived by Jesus.



- They are clearly seen in all policies and practices.
- That come to the fore when the pressures of time and work increase their demands upon us.

### 3. The Catholic Story

- Centres the school in a 2000 year old journey of faith.
- We have a unique Catholic Character which is to be nurtured and grown.
- Have a core philosophy that recognises the importance of sacramentality, charism, mission and Catholic heritage.



### 4. Quality Education

- Commitment to pursue best possible education for pupils.
- Has a vision of school excellence and for all to be the best they can be.





## 5. Discernment

- Advocates a prayerful reflection on the paths of life.
- Listens to the call of the Spirit on that which is right and holy, by following God's will.



## 6. Pastoral Care

- Is the face of Catholic Character, founded upon Gospel values?
- Translates the Mission Statement of the school into daily living.
- Articulates the caring response members of the school community have for each other.





## 7. Community

- Lives in God's image through its relationships.
- Values every member of that community.
- Fosters and promotes belonging.
- Shares its gifts within the community and the world.



## 8. Justice

- Works for justice.
- Model “best” practice in all policies and practices.
- Treats all fairly.



## 9. Earth Partnership

- Lives in the spirit of Laudato Si.
- Models stewardship in our roles as caretakers of God's creation.
- Celebrates the beauty of all creation.



## 10. Religious Education

- As a core subject, its message is lived and confirmed through times of prayer, liturgy and times of explicit curriculum religious education instruction as mandated by the New Zealand Catholic Bishops.
- Is infused with the message of the Gospel as the focus for all



# What do the Gospel virtues look like in your school?

- ❖ Look at your Charter and decide what virtues your school espouses. An example of such virtues may be:
  - Dignity
  - Integrity
  - Love
  - Inclusiveness
  - Excellence
- ❖ Look at the beliefs around each virtue. They may be written in the form of a statement. For example:
  - **Gospel virtues** – our school's model of living is Jesus. Our life and our relationships are shaped by our Catholic, Christian beliefs.
  - **Dignity** – our school enhances the self-esteem and respects the dignity of each person.
  - **Community building** – our school values and works towards a positive partnership between itself, family, parish and the wider community.
  - **Integrity** – our school believes that our actions and behaviour must reflect what we say.
  - **Love** - our school provides an atmosphere of kindness, empathy and understanding in a secure environment which encourages independence.
  - **Inclusiveness** – our school welcomes, respects and values differences and the uniqueness and gifts of each individual.

- ❖ If your school does not have belief statements around the virtues in the Charter, it would be a good idea to develop some statements. One way in which it could be done is:
  - Take the virtues reflected in your Charter
  - Each person writes their beliefs around each virtue
  - In groups of four, take those beliefs and write a common virtues statement
  - Come together as a whole group and get consensus on each virtues statement.
  - **DON'T stop there!!!**

Now figure out what each virtue is going to look like in the day-to-day life of your school.

Maybe it would be interesting for you as a Board to look at your procedures in terms of what the gospel virtues look like.



# Inclusiveness

**Our school welcomes, respects and values differences  
and the uniqueness and gifts of each individual**

What does it look like?



- Signs in different languages
- Artwork representing different cultures
- Resources that will meet the needs of all e.g. toilet and changing facilities
- Access for all
- Signs and maps understood by all
- People representing different cultures and abilities
- All children joining in games and activities
- Teachers with physical resources and training to enable them to meet the needs of all
- Guests being warmly welcomed
- Extra time and resources given when necessary

What does it sound like?



- Welcoming
- Warm greetings
- Peer mediation skills
- Problem solving strategies
- Different languages
- Words of encouragement offered
- Acknowledgement of different gifts and skills
- Being listened to
- Positive manner – e.g. telephone
- Positive comments and affirmation.

What does it feel like?

- Secure, a sense of belonging
- Feeling valued
- Happy
- Positive
- Able to take risks
- Able to achieve
- Able to express your views
- Able to be yourself.

# Catholic Character – School Review

An external review of Catholic Character will take place every four years. This will encompass all dimensions.

To be able to effectively, efficiently and accurately review the Catholic Character, it is necessary to have clearly defined dimensions, which incorporate all aspects of Catholic Character. These key dimensions have been identified as:

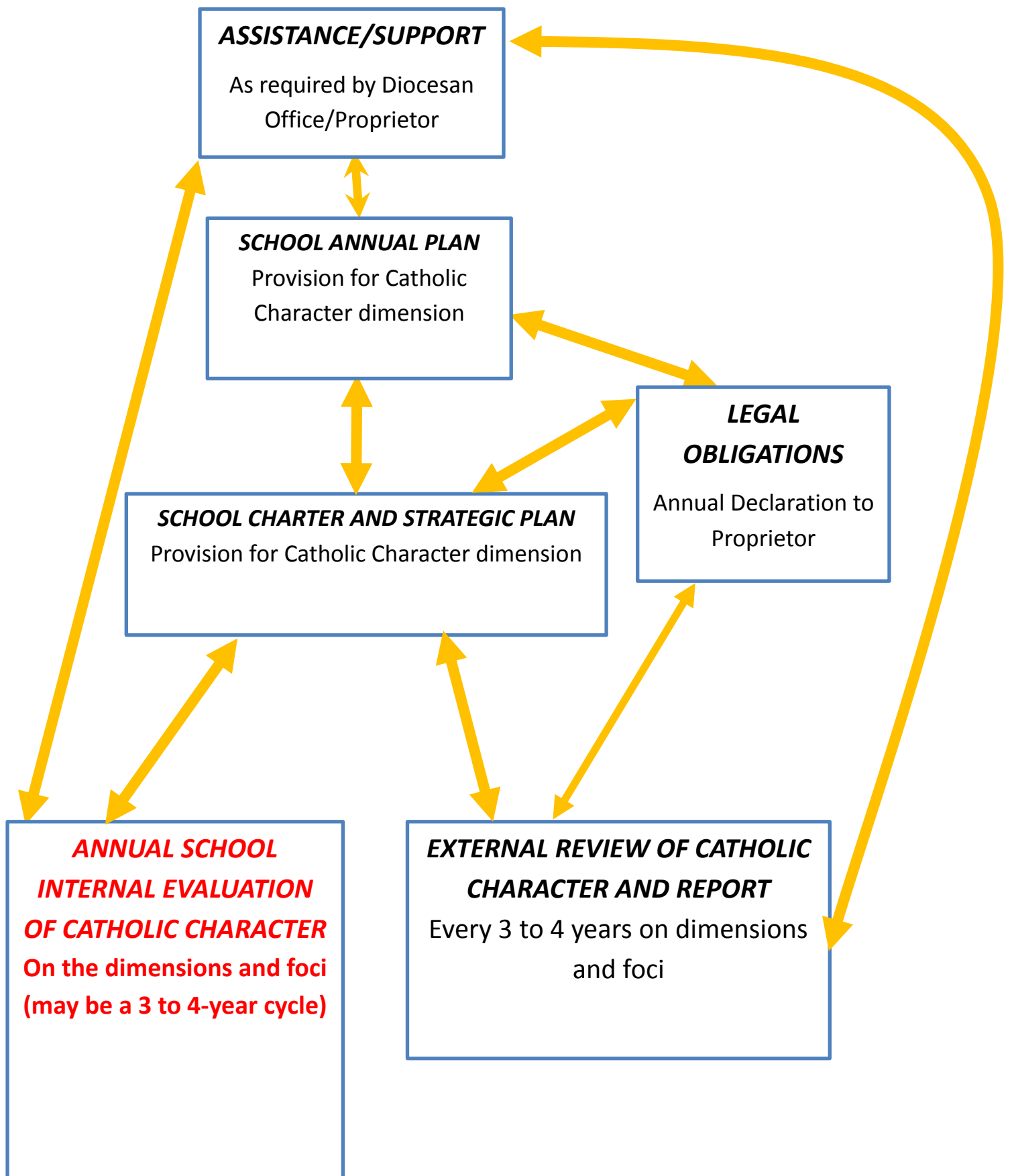
1. Te Tūtaki Ki A Karaiti : Encounter with Christ
2. Te Wakatupu Mā Te Mātauranga : Growth of Knowledge
3. Te Whakaatu Karaitian: Christian Witness
4. Te Kaitiakitanga me to Whakapakkari the Tuakiri Katorika: Safeguarding and Strengthening Catholic Character

These dimensions are also encompassed within The Declaration on Authentic Catholic School Education, issued by the New Zealand Council of Proprietors of Catholic Integrated Schools.

## Three to four year cycle of Annual Internal Evaluation

- Each school can determine how it manages its annual internal evaluation; however, one model is to develop a holistic approach which links the dimensions into the needs of the school and its Catholic Character strategic and annual goals.
- From this the school can develop a timeline for growth and series of performance indicators which may be addressed as part of the school's internal evaluation of Catholic Character.
- Though each school can develop its own model of internal evaluation, this should be in line with the National Handbook developed by NZCEO. This handbook will be used for external reviews.
- The Proprietor's Report will be written in conjunction with the school internal evaluation and sent to the Vicar for Education annually.





### How the Catholic Character Review Cycle Informs Planning





**What are we all  
about?**

# Characteristics of an Authentic Catholic School

- We aspire for excellence in education
- Our structures and practices model an authentic Catholic community
- We provide opportunities and development to grow meaningful communal prayer and worship
- We collaboratively plan retreats and reflective experiences
- We provide a curriculum that reflects Catholic virtues and teaching
- We provide extra curricula activities which focus primarily on the welfare of the students
- We have implemented an organised and professionally resourced pastoral care programme
- We have substantial outreach initiatives based upon the precepts of Catholic Social Justice
- We promote a leadership that practises stewardship
- We have an understanding that employment in a Catholic school entails a sense of vocation for all
- We know that for some it is an acceptance of a ministry.

*Denis McLaughlin*

**So...** if we are an authentic Catholic school we offer a holistic education based on the gospel virtues.

# What about our reporting and planning?



# The Charter

## 1. Catholic Character

- Vision
- Virtues
- Mission

Charter Contents Checklist	Yes (tick)
1. The aim of developing, for the school, policies and practices that reflect New Zealand's cultural diversity and the unique position of the Māori culture.	
2. The aim of ensuring all reasonable steps are taken to provide instruction in Tikanga Māori (Māori culture) and Te Reo Māori (Māori language) for full time students whose parents ask for it.	
3. A long-term strategic planning section that establishes your Board's (BoT) aims and purpose.	
4. A long-term strategic planning section that establishes for the next 3 to 5 years your BoT's aims, objectives, directions and priorities for intended student outcomes, your school's performance and use of resources.	
5. A long-term strategic planning section that includes any aims or objectives that designate your school's special characteristics or its special character.	
6. An annually updated section that establishes for the relevant year your BoT's aims, directions, objective, priorities and targets relating to intended student outcomes, your school's performance and use of resources.	
7. An annually updated section that sets targets for the key activities and achievement of objectives for the year.	
8. Your BoT's aims, objectives, directions, priorities and targets for student achievement, including assessment of students.	
9. Your BoT's aims, objectives, directions, priorities and targets for your BoT's activities aimed at meeting general government policy objectives for all schools, being policy objectives set out or referred to in national education guidelines, and specific policy objectives applying to your school.	
10. Your BoT's aims, objectives, directions, priorities and targets for the management of your schools and Board's capability, resources, assets, and liabilities including human resources, finances, property and other ownership matters.	
11. All annual or long-term plans (or a summary or reference to them), your BoT is required to have or has prepared for its own purposes.	

# The National Education Guidelines (NEGs)

## National Education Guidelines

The National Education Guidelines are defined by Sections 60A of the Education Act 1989  
**The National Education Guidelines have five components:**

1. **National Education Goals**, which are
  - statements of desirable achievements by the school system, or by an element of the school system; and statements of government policy objectives for the school system
2. **Foundation Curriculum Policy Statements**, which are statements of policy concerning teaching, learning, and assessment that are made for the purposes of underpinning and giving direction to -
  - The way in which curriculum and assessment responsibilities are to be managed in schools:
  - National curriculum statements and locally developed curriculum
3. **National Curriculum Statements** (statements of -
  - The areas of knowledge and understanding to be covered by students; and
  - The skills to be developed by students; and
  - Desirable levels of knowledge, understanding, and skill, to be achieved by students, during the years of schooling)
4. **National Administration Guidelines** (NAGs), which are guidelines relating to school administration and which may (without limitation) -
  - set out statements of desirable codes or principles of conduct or administration for specified kinds or descriptions of person or body, including guidelines for the purposes of section 61:
  - set out requirements relating to planning and reporting including -
  - communicate the Government's policy objectives:
  - set out transitional provisions for the purposes of national administration guidelines.

## The National Education Guidelines given effect by three parts of the Education Act

1. **Section 61 (2)** which states:  
The purpose of a school charter is to establish the mission, aims, objectives, directions, and targets of the Board that will give effect to the Government's national education guidelines and the Board's priorities.
2. **Section 61 (4) (b).**  
A school charter must include the Board's aims, objectives, directions, priorities, and targets in the following categories:  
... (b) the Board's activities aimed at meeting both general government policy objectives for all schools, being policy objectives set out or referred to in national education guidelines, and specific policy objectives applying to that school
3. **and Section 62 (2)** which states  
A school charter must be prepared and updated in accordance with national administration guidelines.

# **The Role of the Chairperson of the Board of Trustees**

## **Introduction**

The Chairperson is the school's leader in all community, public and non-professional situations. The Chairperson's role is to oversee all Board activities and to act as spokesperson for the Board.

The Chairperson is (re)elected each year following the AGM.

## **Areas of Responsibility**

- To provide leadership to the Board of Trustees
- To provide appropriate support to the Principal
- To ensure that an annual Performance Agreement is negotiated and carried out with the Principal
- To facilitate Board meetings and establish a working code of ethics
- To adhere to and develop meeting procedures
- To create and maintain an environment of unity, common purpose and harmony within the Board of Trustees
- To ensure that the Board operates within its governance role
- To assist subcommittees through processes and procedures
- To document how NEGs and NAGs are being implemented by maintaining a programme of internal evaluation
- To ensure that appropriate documentation is filed for official agencies to view
- To work with the Principal and Board in the formation of an Annual School Development Plan
- To draw up a monthly agenda for Board meetings.

# The Role of the Principal on the Board of Trustees

## Introduction

The Principal is the link between the Board of Trustees and the school. It is the responsibility of the Principal to ensure free and positive communication is maintained.

## Areas of Responsibility

- To liaise regularly with the Chairperson
- To prepare a Principal's report for each meeting of the Board of Trustees and the Annual Meeting
- To implement policies and procedures
- To contribute constructively to Board of Trustee meetings
- To lead the Board of Trustees where necessary in the formation of policies and procedures
- To inform the Board of Trustees of the ongoing welfare and progress of the staff, pupils and community
- To provide the Board of Trustees sub-committees with school-based information which would be necessary for completion of their tasks
- To inform the Board of Trustees of education activities
- To present an education plan annually
- To report on the curriculum with respect to NAG 1.

By liaising with the Board of Trustees in a manner which is informative, pertinent and in a way, that is understood by all members, the Principal will maintain a school which allows all pupils access to the education required by the Charter.

*Ack: Peter Bradley*



# The Role of the Trustees in a Catholic State Integrated School

## All Board Members

- All trustees have an obligation to maintain the Catholic Character of the school.
- Are accountable to the Chairperson.
- Accept the paramount importance of the Charter, Acts and employment contracts when making decisions
- Attend the required number of meetings per year as well as various sub-committee meetings as required
- Are prepared to accept responsibilities within the Board
- Acknowledge the importance and need for continuous training related to their position

## Focus Areas

- S464 and S467 positions – ensure they are filled by teachers who meet the requirements
- Religious Education Courses – ensure teachers have the opportunity for professional development in this area and to ensure funding is provided
- Link between School and Parish – ensure that all that is possible is done to centre the school community within the larger parish one
- Maximum Roll – ensure that this is managed effectively
- Board Policies – to ensure these policies reflect the school's Catholic Character
- Board Practice – to ensure BOT practice reflect Catholic Character
- Building Maintenance – ensuring the buildings leased to the Board by the Proprietor are kept in satisfactory condition
- Proprietor's Appointees Annual Report – ensuring that an Annual Report is forwarded at the end of the year.
- The Proprietor is consulted as part of the school's biennial review of their health and sex education programme.
- To report to the Proprietor if any cause for concern is held regarding their responsibility for safeguarding and strengthening the school's Catholic Character.

# Role of Proprietor's appointee on the Board of Trustees

Proprietor's appointees on the Board are full members of the Board, with all the rights and obligations of other Board members. All Board members have responsibility for the Catholic special character of the school inscribed in the school's Integration Agreement and charter.

The Proprietor's appointees also have some special responsibilities that derive from the fundamental characteristics of Catholic schools as described in Canon Law and safeguarded by the Education Act 1989. These responsibilities are to:

1. Assist the Board to carry out its obligations to ensure that the school remains a Catholic school and that it fulfils the primary objective for which it was founded. The primary objective of providing a Catholic education has implications for the appointment of teachers, the enrolment of students, the Religious Education programme and for other matters relating to the school's special character.
2. Be an important channel of communication between the school and the Bishop and/or Proprietor.
3. Assist the Board in ensuring that the Proprietor's property is kept in good order, repair and condition, and ensure that the proportion of the Operations Grant that is intended to cover the repair and maintenance of buildings is used for this purpose.
4. Report to the Proprietor on the progress of the school, in writing, at least annually (or more often if requested or if the need arises).

## Job description for a Proprietor's appointee to the Board of Trustees

A Proprietor's appointee to the Board of Trustees must:

- participate fully in Board activities, contributing to discussion and making decisions in the best interests of the school
- work closely with the Principal and other Board members to ensure that the school remains a Catholic school
- ensure that the school fulfils its primary purpose of giving a Catholic education to Catholic children and young people
- help preserve the Catholic Character by being aware of relevant policies of the Proprietor, and by acquiring knowledge and expertise in the areas that influence Catholic Character – in particular, staff appointments, staff relationships, school programmes and student enrolments
- seek to ensure that the school strives for excellence in all of its endeavours
- be sensitive to matters of equity and justice, and have respect for different cultural, ethnic and family backgrounds and circumstances
- support the Religious Education programme and the Director of Religious Studies
- ensure that the Catholic community's property is kept in good order
- be a channel of communication between the school and the Proprietor (note that for diocesan schools, communication is normally through the Diocesan Education Office)
- communicate with the Proprietor on a regular basis about property issues
- report annually to the Proprietor in writing (see Appendix 2.2 for details of what this report should cover)

This report is normally a joint report by the Proprietor's appointees. It covers both strengths and weaknesses and contains the views of the appointees, even if these opinions are not shared by the remainder of the Board. As a matter of courtesy, a copy of the report is shown to the Principal and presented to the Board.

# Policy on Catholic Character

## Rationale:

Part 33 of the 1989 Education Act sets out in law how Integrated Schools deliver education with a Special Character. For Catholic schools this means providing an environment where people experience, learn and live out the virtues of Jesus Christ in accordance with the worship, teaching and traditions of the Roman Catholic Church.

## Guidelines:

The Catholic School Community will work to:

- To help children grow in their personal relationship with God
- To foster self-esteem and respectful relationships based on a commitment to the dignity, culture and equality of all persons, and modelled on gospel virtues
- To teach and maintain all Christian virtues including reconciliation, justice, integrity of the environment, honesty, peace and a preferential option for the disadvantaged
- To encourage concern for others through the practice of pastoral care of, and by, all those associated with the school community.
- To foster an awareness in children of their wider membership in the church universal, and their responsibility in its mission.



**Procedures:**

The school will:

- Adhere to the Catholic Character goals and objectives as outlined in the Charter document
- Provide systematic instruction in faith via the Religious Education Programme approved by the Archbishop of Wellington, as well as utilising other resources
- Develop the school's daily prayer life.
- Provide opportunities for children and parents to participate in celebrations of the Eucharist, Sacrament of Reconciliation and other liturgical celebrations
- Establish a sound working, worshipping and pastoral relationship with the Parish or Pastoral area.
- Ensure that all systems and policies within the school reflect the Catholic Character as provided for in part 33 of the 1989 Education Act and in the Integration Agreement for the school.
- Provide staff and members of the Board of Trustees with opportunities for ongoing development in their faith and a deepening awareness of their participation in the teaching and pastoral mission of the Church
- Develop and carry out a process of annual review of Catholic Character that will focus on the areas of curriculum, pastoral care, spiritual climate, statutory requirements and report annually to the local Bishop by way of the Proprietor's Report
- Ensure that the physical environment is reflective of the school's Catholic charism and culture.
- Provide a Pastoral Care statement and a document of implementation.



# A Shared Wisdom Model

*Mary Benet McKinney*

Members of a Board of Trustees operate based on shared wisdom.

As members come together as a group to share the very wisdom of God, each is given a piece of that wisdom.

Therefore, if each member has been given a piece of that wisdom, then each has the responsibility to share that wisdom with others.

Further, if each member has been given a piece of God's wisdom, then each member needs to listen when that wisdom is being shared.

The bottom line of the philosophy of shared wisdom is a deep faith that the Spirit lives in the group – and speaks through the lived experience of each.

The process of sharing wisdom may be likened to completing a jigsaw. Each person has a piece of the jigsaw which, when matched with the other pieces of wisdom, forms a complete picture.

No one person can claim all the wisdom, because if that was so, then that person would be God.

Commitment to sharing the wisdom at Board meetings also implies the acceptance of taking responsibility for preparing for meetings, attending meetings and co-operating with all involved.

Board members reach decisions through consensus. To share decisions in a church model is to take the time to do the listening, the praying and sharing that is necessary to reach a consensus. There is a need to let go of the need to win.

Consensus is reached only after suitable and wide-ranging discussion and consultation occur. The four ingredients of decision-making in the shared wisdom model are gathering data, reflection, sharing information and consensus testing. The latter occurs when all members can live gracefully with the decision, even though some may have differing points of view. In attempting consensus all issues should be fully aired, and all members should be heard. Members need to be selfless, dispassionate, sensitive and frank in relation to an issue.

Consensus is assisted through the process of discernment.

Discernment involves a challenge to individuals to develop a greater spiritual depth.

Discernment may be defined as a "graced ability".

# The Process Skills

These are meeting skills that support the shared wisdom model and allow the wisdom of the group to surface. When a group develops competency in these skills, the responsibility for decision making and for the success of the meeting falls equally on every participant.

## Task Skills

Task skills refer to behaviours that are concerned with the group getting its job done. They are:

- **Initiating** - *bringing* new ideas, questions and suggestions to the attention of the group. Clarity is critical to the skill of initiating.
- **Seeking information** – requesting facts, ideas, opinions, feelings. Sincerity in seeking others' wisdom is necessary.
- **Giving information** – offering facts, information, concerns, suggestions. Each member of the group needs to recognise his or her obligation to share wisdom.
- **Clarifying** – interpreting information and ideas, defining terms, clearing up confusion. Clarifying saves much wasted time.
- **Summarising** – pulling together related ideas, restating what has been discussed. This allows the group to move on to the next step.
- **Tracking the agenda's** – bringing the group or an individual back on target, keeping the group focused, confronting topic jumpers. Practising this skill is often an uncomfortable but necessary task.
- **Consensus testing** – doing a 'whip-around', a quick survey of each member, to see if the group is near a decision, testing a possible conclusion, checking that all the wisdom has surfaced. This is a most useful skill, especially for the Chairperson or Leader.

- **Maintenance Skills**

These skills are important to the morale of the group. By developing these skills, group members maintain good and harmonious working relationships and create an atmosphere that enables each member to contribute maximally. These skills include:

- **Gate keeping** - *controlling* the channels of communication by
  1. Opening gates (helping others get into the discussion) and
  2. Closing gates (providing equal time for all)

- **Encouraging - supporting**, being friendly, showing interest in the discussion, indicating an attitude of respect for others' wisdom.
- **Negotiating** - considering compromise, identifying what is agreed upon as well as what is in conflict, modifying in the interest of the group, trusting the wisdom of the group.
- **Standard testing and setting** - testing group satisfaction with norms and procedures, offering alternatives for consideration.
- **Expressing feelings** – verbalising feelings, trusting the validity of personal feelings.
- **Tracking the discussion** – bringing the group back to a point that has been lost or ignored, getting the group going again.

### Decision-making Skills

Groups are making decisions all the time. They must understand how decisions are being made and judge the appropriateness of the process. Inappropriate decision-making techniques are described below. In each case someone in the group needs to name what has happened and ask that all members of the group be allowed to share wisdom and participate in the decision.

1. **The plop** occurs when the group decides by ignoring the contribution and the person making the contribution. This is always a negative way of deciding. The group needs to deal with lost wisdom.
2. **The self-authorised decision** happens when someone announces a decision and carries it out without checking with the group. If the group allows this to happen, the self-authorised decision becomes the group's decision.
3. **The handclasp** happens when one member of the group supports another's suggestion and the two proceed to decide without checking it out with the group. If the group allows this to happen, the decision of the two members becomes the group's decision.
4. **A minority decision** occurs when a subgroup railroads a decision through.
5. **A majority decision** is made when a majority can push through a decision over the objections of the minority. Because it is a win-lose situation, this is an inappropriate way to arrive at decisions in a shared wisdom model.

The group needs to agree in advance that all decisions will be consensus decisions. Only then will the group be able to arrive at decisions that can be lived with gracefully by all its members.



Those involved in a shared wisdom model will need to learn these process skills, practice them, and evaluate their own performance as well as the group's growth and faithfulness to these skills. Reflections 9 and 10 are provided to guide groups in testing their understanding and skill development.

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