

A reference document for Mission of Catholic schools in Queensland



March 2018

Introduction:

The Catholic school *is called to be living witness to the love of God. It can, moreover, become a means through which it is possible to discern, in the light of the Gospel, what is possible in the world, what needs to be transformed and what injustices must be overcome.* (Educating Together in Catholic schools, paragraph 46, 2007)

Definitions:

Mission statement: A public declaration organisations use to describe their founding purpose and major organisational commitments — what they do and why they do it.

Queensland Catholic Education Commission (the Commission): The Commission is a non-profit body of the Corporation of the Roman Catholic Bishops of Queensland. The Commission, acting pursuant to its delegations from delegating authorities has as its principal goal the greater co-ordination and advancement of Catholic education in Queensland with due regard for the autonomy of the delegating authorities.

Catholic School Authorities: Catholic School Authorities are the 22 incorporated entities accredited to manage, administer and operate schools under the [Education \(Accreditation of Non-State Schools\) Act 2017](#).

Catholic school: There are three types of Catholic schools in Queensland: parish schools, diocesan schools and schools operated by other Catholic School Authorities¹. The Brisbane Archdiocese has three Ecumenical schools and colleges. These school communities work together within the broader mission of the associated faith partners at each school.

Catholic education: The Catholic Church sees education of children as, primarily, the right and responsibility of parents/carers. Parents/carers seek the assistance of Catholic schools in providing education for their children. The Church acknowledges that civic authorities have a valid interest in education and its provision. The Church believes that the fullness of human life can only be experienced through attachment to Christ and, therefore, a full education for children in Catholic schools must include education in matters of faith. Families are integral members of the school community and are called to respect and acknowledge the Catholic identity of the schools. Two recent *Synods on the Family* have reiterated the Catholic Church's view of parents/carers as the first educators of children, and schools – Catholic and non-Catholic – as partners. Pope Francis explains that the relationship between parents/carers and children must be one of wisdom, of a great balance, and this needs to be done so that children can grow up to be responsible for themselves and for others. And this can only be done with love, tenderness and patience.²

¹ Catholic Parish schools are owned in canon law by the relevant parish, however, certain responsibilities are delegated to the Catholic Education Office for their operation (Collaborating for Mission: The Parish and the Catholic School, 2014, p13). Catholic diocesan schools are those operated and governed by diocesan Catholic Education/Schools Offices. Other Catholic School Authorities, those which are not operated by diocesan authorities, are operated by Catholic religious institutes or *public juridic persons*.

² Pope Francis, on the family and education, general audience, St Peter's Square May 2015.

Catholic schools attend to the development of the whole person's academic, spiritual, social, emotional and physical needs and directed at creating a synthesis between faith, culture and life. Teaching staff are supported to develop their capacity to deliver this curriculum through the *Accreditation to Teach* and formation processes.

Academic standards are ensured as Catholic schools in Queensland implement the Australian Curriculum and QCAA senior syllabuses.

Values: In a Catholic school setting, values emerge from the deep wells of faith tradition based on the Person of Jesus. For example, social justice is not just about humanistic sensibilities but is deepened by such inspiration as comes from Micah: 'To live justly, love tenderly and walk humbly with our God'. Reflection, contemplative practice and meditation deepen spiritual understanding, empower students to be grateful for the gifts of life, and to critique aspects of culture, unconscious bias and unquestioned privilege.

Engagement with all who seek its values: Regardless of religion or family background, all students are expected to engage as far as they are able with the Catholic beliefs, rituals and values that are promoted in the curriculum.

Catholic schools are not always able to accept every family who applies, due to unavailability of places. Many schools have waiting lists and are guided by their Authority's enrolment policy that outlines the priorities to be applied when accepting enrolments.

Rationale:

The constitution of the Queensland Catholic Education Commission (QCEC), 2017, states that QCEC, acting pursuant to its delegations from delegating authorities has as its principal goal the greater co-ordination and advancement of Catholic education in Queensland with due regard for the autonomy of the delegating authorities. It is therefore important to have a clear understanding of the purpose of Catholic education and its difference to other types of schooling in Queensland. This also clarifies the purpose of Catholic education to other bodies the Commission interacts with, such as

- Government agencies
- Other education sectors
- Catholic agencies
- Community and particularly parents and carers considering a Catholic education for their children as well as act as a touchstone for Catholic School Authorities.

Finally, a clearly defined and consistently understood mission of Catholic schools in Queensland provides a reference point for other Catholic position statements, policies and strategic documents.

Mission Statement:

The mission of Catholic schools in Queensland in relationship with the Catholic Church and in partnership with parents, is to educate and form students who are challenged to live the Gospel of Jesus Christ, participate critically and authentically in faith contexts and through a spirituality of communion be purposeful, hopeful, joyful and open to dialogue and engagement with wider society.

Implications:

When considering the mission of Catholic schools in Queensland, Catholic School Authorities may consider the following:

1. Catholic schools are welcoming, inclusive, joyful, authentic, hopeful and operate within a family-oriented environment that is both safe and caring. Students and staff exhibit high standards of behaviour and respect for self and others and there exists a sense of belonging and community.
2. Catholic schools make explicit the positive and holistic anthropology that inspires Catholic education. The source of authentic personal fulfilment is *attained and matured in the measure that it is offered up in order to give life to others*. This is most evident in those who have first received the joy of Christ and have a deep enthusiasm and sensitivity to the needs of others.³
3. Schools provide quality learning and teaching as well as assist students in their search for meaning for life. Catholic schools are a source of hope to every people through their ability to respond to the "signs of the times"

³ *Evangelii Gaudium* 9, 10, Pope Francis.

and avoid *cling[ing] to a nostalgia for structures and customs which are no longer life-giving in today's world.*⁴ Teachers provide memory and the wisdom of experience and young people bring hope and open us to the future.

4. The curriculum of a Catholic school contributes to its purpose (mission) through the integration of life, culture and faith of its students. It goes beyond understanding to making judgements, decisions and actions formed from wisdom and applied to the lives of students, addressing issues of relevance beyond their immediate world as well as those related to their personal lives⁵.

5. In a Catholic school, values emerge from the deep wells of faith tradition such as Catholic Social Teachings, which can be used as a framework for action.

6. Staff formation builds capacity to deliver Catholic education for the future.

7. Enrolment policies reflect an openness to all who seek values of Catholic schooling.

⁴ *Evangelii Gaudium* 108, Pope Francis.

⁵ Catholic Curriculum: A mission to the heart of young people, 2011, p3.