

A reference document for Mission of Catholic Schools in Queensland



October 2023

Introduction:

In the contemporary Australian context, The Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Educational Declaration affirms that *“Education has the power to transform lives. It supports young people to realise their potential by providing skills they need to participate in the economy and in society and contributing to every aspect of their wellbeing.”* The declaration affirms that education *‘plays a vital role in promoting the intellectual, physical, social, emotional, moral, spiritual and aesthetic development and wellbeing of young Australians’*.¹

The Catholic school is established to be a school for the human person and of human persons.² *‘The person of each individual human being, in his or her material and spiritual needs, is at the heart of Christ’s teaching: this is why the promotion of the human person is the goal of the Catholic school’*.³

Education in the Catholic Tradition in Catholic schools is a response to sharing the mission of God in the world.⁴ *‘No less than other schools does the Catholic school pursue cultural goals and the human formation of youth. But its proper function is to create for the school community a special atmosphere animated by the Gospel spirit’*.⁵ *The Catholic school reflects an inclusive, respectful, aspirational, complex, interdependent, multi-faith and multicultural community*.⁶

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.⁷

¹ Education Council (2019), *The Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration*. Retrieved from: <https://www.education.gov.au/alice-springs-mparntwe-education-declaration/resources/alice-springs-mparntwe-education-declaration>

² Congregation for Catholic Education (1997). *The Catholic School in the Threshold of the Third Millennium*, n.9

³ Cfr. John Paul II, *Address to the I National Meeting of the Catholic School in Italy*, in "L'Osservatore Romano", 24 November 1991, p. 4.

⁴ La Salle Academy (2023) *In the Light of Faith Lumen Fidei* | A Mission Practice Relationship Framework, p.5.

⁵ Pope Paul VI (1965). *Declaration on Christian Education: Gravissimum Educationis*, n. 8.

⁶ La Salle Academy. (2023). *In the Light of Faith Lumen Fidei* | A Mission Practice Relationship Framework, p.4.

⁷ Congregation for Catholic Education (2007), *Educating Together in Catholic schools*, paragraph 46.

Definitions:

Catholic school: There are three types of Catholic schools in Queensland: parish schools, diocesan schools and schools operated by other Catholic School Authorities. 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.⁸

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 and the promotion of excellence and equity within Catholic schools with due regard for the autonomy of the delegating authorities.

Catholic School Authorities: Catholic School Authorities are the 23 incorporated entities accredited to manage, administer and operate schools under the [Education \(Accreditation of Non-State Schools\) Act 2017](#).

Catholic education: The Catholic Church recognises the 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. *'In nurturing faith, we accompany children and young people on a Christ-centered, intentional, ongoing and reflective process that focuses on the growth of individuals and communities from their lived experiences, in spiritual awareness, theological understanding, vocational motivation and capabilities for mission and service in the world'*.⁹

Families, as integral members of the school community are called to respect and acknowledge the Catholic identity of the school. The Congregation for Catholic Education in January 2022 affirms the role of parents as the first persons responsible for the education of their children.¹⁰ Pope Francis explains that the relationship between parents/carers and children must be one of wisdom, of great balance, so that children can grow and develop to be responsible for themselves and for others. And this can only be done with love, tenderness and patience.¹¹

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. Religious Education is the learning area at the heart of the Catholic school. Teaching staff are supported to develop their capacity to deliver this curriculum through the *Accreditation to Teach* and formation processes. Religious Education is a learning area with a formal curriculum for the classroom teaching of religion and holds the same demands

⁸ 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*.

⁹ National Catholic Education Commission (2022). *A Framework for Student Faith Formation in Catholic Schools*, p. 9. Retrieved from https://ncec.catholic.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/Student-Faith-Formation-in-Catholic-Schools_Digital-Final.pdf

¹⁰ The Congregation for Catholic Education (2022). *The Identity for the Catholic School for a Culture of Dialogue*. Retrieved from https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccatheduc/documents/rc_con_ccatheduc_doc_20220125_istruzione-identita-scuola-cattolica_en.html

¹¹ Pope Francis, on the family and education, general audience, St Peter's Square May 2015

and rigour as other study areas.¹² Academic standards in other learning areas are ensured as Catholic schools in Queensland implement the Australian Curriculum and QCAA senior syllabuses.

*Education is above all a matter of love and responsibility handed down from one generation to another.*¹³

Values: In a Catholic school setting, values emerge from the Catholic Christian faith tradition based on the Person of Jesus and on the Catholic View of Christian anthropology, recognising each person is created in the image of God. Social justice is not just about humanistic sensibilities but is deepened by such inspiration as comes from Micah (6:8) 'To live justly, love tenderly and walk humbly with our God'. Reflection, contemplative practice and meditation deepen spiritual understanding, offering students an opportunity to be empowered to be grateful for the gifts of life, and to critique aspects of culture, unconscious bias and unquestioned privilege.

The Global Compact on Education *Vademecum (2020)* affirms Catholic education's commitment to *listen to the voices of children and young people to whom we pass on values and knowledge in order to build together a future of justice, peace and a dignified life for every person.*¹² These values include respect for each person's dignity, rights and identity; ensuring equity for all and integration of marginalised people; sustainable development; education to openness and encounter with the other; service to others; working for the common good and safeguarding our common home.

Engagement with all who seek its values: Catholic schools support families to choose an accessible faith-based education that is consistent with their beliefs and values. As part of enrolment in a Catholic School, students and families are asked to support the ethos and mission of the community.¹⁴ Catholic schools in Queensland educate in a welcoming environment .

At times, enrolment interest for Catholic schools exceeds the maximum number of students that the school can cater for. In this instance, schools 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), 2022, 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 and the promotion of excellence and equity within Catholic schools 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.

¹² National Catholic Education Commission. *Framing Paper Religious Education in Australian Catholic Schools* Retrieved from <https://ncec.catholic.edu.au/resource-centre/framing-paper-religious-education-in-australian-catholic-schools/>

¹³ *Global Compact on Education*. Retrieved from <https://www.educationglobalcompact.org/resources/Risorse/vademecum-english.pdf%2013>

¹⁴ National Catholic Education Commission. Retrieved from <https://ncec.catholic.edu.au/students-families/enrolment-information/>

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 intellectually, socially, physically, and spiritually. Students are invited to encounter and live the Gospel of Jesus Christ, participate critically and authentically in faith contexts and through a spirituality of communion to be purposeful, hopeful, joyful, open to dialogue and engagement with wider society. Catholic schools, inspired by the message and actions of Jesus Christ, 'I came that they may have life and have it to the full' (John 10:10), work to ensure students flourish in the fullness of their humanity.

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. *Vademecum, Global Compact on Education (2019)*¹² supports an open and inclusive education, including patient listening, constructive dialogue and better mutual understanding.
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.¹⁵ *Vademecum, Global Compact on Education (2019)* affirms our shared journey as an 'educating village' must have the courage to '*make the human persons the centre of every educational program, in order to foster their distinctiveness and their capacity for relationship with others, against the spread of a throwaway culture and rapid change*'.¹⁶
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 all people through their ability to respond to the 'signs of the times' and avoid '*cling[ing] to a nostalgia for structures and customs which are no longer life-giving in today's world*'.¹⁷ 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 including Religious Education, 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 lives.¹⁸

¹² *Global Compact on Education*. Retrieved from <https://www.educationglobalcompact.org/resources/Risorse/vademecum-english.pdf%2013>

¹⁵ *Evangelii Gaudium* 9,10, Pope Francis

¹⁶ *Global Compact on Education*. p.10 Retrieved from: <https://www.educationglobalcompact.org/resources/Risorse/vademecum-english.pdf>

¹⁷ *Evangelii Gaudium* 108, Pope Francis

¹⁸ D'Orsa J. & T. (2011) *Catholic Curriculum: A Mission to the Heart of Young People*, p3.

5. In a Catholic school, values emerge from the deep wells of faith tradition, grounded in the Scripture and animated through the life of Christ, emerging through Tradition, Catholic Social Teachings and reason and reflected in school charisms. These values then provide the foundation for all frameworks, policies and procedures that emerge within a Catholic School.¹⁹
6. Christ -centred staff formation, scripturally rich and grounded in the teachings of the Church, focusing on the growth of individuals and communities in spiritual awareness, theological understanding, vocational motivation and in capabilities for mission and service in the world, builds capacity to deliver Catholic education for the future. Formation for the mission of Catholic Education is a process that is systematic, collaborative, graduated and ongoing.²⁰
7. Enrolment policies reflect an openness to all who seek to grow, learn, dialogue with and flourish in the faith-based life of Catholic schooling ensuring the vulnerable and marginalised are included and supported.

Date of publication: October 2023

Next review: October 2025

¹⁹ Australian Catholic Bishops Conference 2020, Retrieved from: <https://socialjustice.catholic.org.au/catholic-social-teaching/catholic-social-teaching-faqs/>

²⁰ National Catholic Education Commission *A Framework for formation for mission in Catholic education*. Retrieved from <https://ncec.catholic.edu.au/resource-centre/a-framework-for-formation-for-mission-in-catholic-education/>