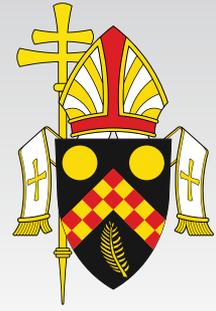


Policy Statement



ARCHDIOCESE OF BRISBANE
Catholic Education Council

PROVISION OF CATHOLIC SCHOOLING

POLICY

The Catholic Archdiocese of Brisbane is committed to achieving its educational vision through maximising the provision of Catholic schooling for young people in the Archdiocese, including the regular criteria based review of the location and nature of existing Catholic schools.

INTRODUCTION

This policy seeks to provide clear direction on decision-making processes regarding the establishment of new schools as well as the viability of and necessity for proposed changes to the provision of educational opportunities in existing schools. In addition, it addresses within the community of parish and archdiocesan schools administered by the Archdiocese through Brisbane Catholic Education.

These processes include the strategic planning for schooling in significant areas of population growth and change. The changes can involve an increase or decrease in enrolments through the amalgamation of schools, change of legal and/or canonical governance of a school, adding or reducing the year levels of a school, and major changes to the structure, including the closure or relocation of a school.

RATIONALE

The Catholic Education Council recommends to the Archbishop the establishment, closure or change of structure of a school or schools. This is done following consultation with the school community, which informs the discernment by the parish priest and Brisbane Catholic Education prior to the recommendation to the Catholic Education Council.

The decision to increase or decrease enrolments at a school is made by the Executive Director, following a recommendation from the Planning Advisory Committee. In the case of Parish schools, the Parish Priest endorses the increase or decrease in enrolments prior to the application being considered by the Planning Advisory Committee.

The ongoing pastoral involvement of the local community is essential; consultation within the parish and broader community should be integral to the entire process of planning for school provision. "The fundamental duty of the Catholic school to evangelise must be grounded in the organic pastoral work of the Christian community."¹

Parents, as first educators of their children, can legitimately expect that, wherever possible, there is access to an "authentic experience of Catholic Christian community."² Catholic schools, as one part of the Church (*communio*) within the Archdiocese of Brisbane, provide this opportunity.

"Catholic Schools, like state schools, fulfil a public role, for their presence guarantees cultural and educational pluralism and, above all, the freedom and right of families to see that their children receive the sort of education they wish for them."³ Brisbane Catholic Education is committed to the equitable provision of quality and inclusive catholic schools that meet contemporary educational needs across the Archdiocese. It also strives to "offer its educational service to the poor or those who are deprived of family help and affection or those who are far from faith."⁴

Brisbane Catholic Education coordinates the processes for school development. The establishment of a new school, or closure of an existing school, is a major decision for the Archdiocese, parish and the local community. As part of ongoing strategic planning and renewal, either the local parish communities or Brisbane Catholic Education may initiate a process to examine the change needed in the provision of Catholic schooling in a particular parish or region of the archdiocese.

Decision-making will vary according to the change deemed necessary. This may be based on criteria including demographic change or growth; local and pastoral needs; change in the nature or structure of an existing school; the sustainability of an existing school and/or parish community and the equitable distribution of financial resources available to the local parish and Archdiocesan school communities.

The Executive Director, Archdiocese of Brisbane Catholic Education determines the process of consultation and decision making to be followed regarding the change in provision of schooling within a community, and making a recommendation to the Catholic Education Council.

The Catholic Education Council is open to the establishment of new schools under the governance of other Catholic school authorities. Such a development would be planned in consultation with Brisbane Catholic Education. The decision to open a school under the governance of another Catholic school authority requires the approval of the Archbishop.

CONSEQUENCES

In implementing this policy, Brisbane Catholic Education in consultation with the parish priest and local community will:

Mission and Religious Education

- Support parents as the first educators of their children.
- Strive to meet the demand of the Church's preferential option for the poor.
- Ensure that all school communities, whether under parish or archdiocesan governance, recognise that the school is part of the mission of the local parish and part of that community.
- Develop an educational vision for each new and developing school that articulates a commitment to teach and witness to the values of Jesus in its community.
- Actively seek opportunities to support the evangelising mission of local parish communities in the Archdiocese particularly recognising that schools provide an opportunity for families to renew their relationship with Church.
- Articulate ways in which the Church's educational mission to the parish and local community will continue after a major change or closure of a school.
- Support parish communities who seek to add an educational dimension to ecumenical endeavours already in place.
- Provide pastoral support for parish and local communities who are impacted by major proposed changes.

Learning and Teaching

- Seek to further develop existing schools and establish new schools that complement the quality education provided by surrounding parish, Archdiocesan and religious institute schools, while allowing them to remain viable.
- Develop a sound educational brief and facility master plan for each existing school and new school development.
- Provide contemporary educational programs and facilities.
- Provide models of Catholic schooling that meet the needs and are inclusive of the communities that they serve.
- Assess the level of student enrolment and staffing and the school's capacity to provide appropriate interaction and social development.

Professional Practice and Collaborative Relationships

- Seek to develop and strengthen harmonious relationships between the school, parent and local parish communities.
- Consult with surrounding parish, Archdiocesan and religious institute school communities impacted by the proposed new school or the expansion or closure of an existing school.
- Develop collaborative pastoral practices and agreements for Archdiocesan schools with the local parish.
- Comply with industrial requirements to provide alternative employment for staff employed in a continuing capacity.
- Develop recommendations to the Executive Director based on clearly defined and agreed strategic benchmarks.
- Communicate with local, state and commonwealth governments, and apply for relevant approvals.

Strategic Resourcing

- Maximise access to Catholic schooling for families in areas of population growth and geographical remoteness.
- Evaluate the adequacy of current and planned resources for the provision of quality education, and plan alternatives to current or future educational provision.
- Maximise access to Catholic schools for people in situations of poverty and marginalisation.
- Review and analyse relevant demographic information about school age populations, school enrolment and participation rates for Catholic schooling.
- Review urban development plans of state and local government and private developers.
- Consider the capacity of local parish and school systemic resources as to the financial affordability of proposed changes to existing schools; opening of new schools or when considering school closure.
- Examine the capacity of the local community and the community of schools to ensure there are appropriate resources to support the delivery and support of contemporary quality Catholic education
- Determine a school student capacity, site size, location and facility design that maximises the quality of the educational and pastoral provision as well as geographical access and the optimal use of financial resources.
- Recognise the history of the school community, and the contributions made by parishes, Religious Institutes, Archdiocesan agencies and governments.
- Propose strategies and agreements for transitional and future financial and property matters.

Responsibilities & Decision Making

- Provide transparent planning processes that include input from current and potential stakeholders.
- Regularly review the consultation process for school development.
- Develop and regularly update the Brisbane Catholic Education policies, procedures and guidelines for the establishment of new schools, the extension of existing schools, and for the change in structure, location or closure of schools.
- Develop and regularly review a strategy plan for the future provision of Catholic schooling.
- Consult with Catholic schools operated by other Catholic school authorities using the agreed Archdiocese of Brisbane Change Management Process.
- Provide comprehensive advice to the Executive Director on planning for the extension of provision for schooling in existing schools.
- Provide comprehensive advice to Catholic Education Council on new school development, change of structure or where closure should be considered.
- Facilitate a process of review for identified schools that involves research of the educational, pastoral, socioeconomic and financial factors as well as a broad consultation strategy to inform the decision making process.

REFERENCES

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RELATED BRISBANE CATHOLIC EDUCATION DOCUMENTS:

Procedure for New School Planning and Development, 2012

New School Development Procedure, 2011

Procedures for Applying To Increase Student Enrolments, 2011

Change Management Process, 2013

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- ¹ The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium. Section 3, P. 6.
 - ² Queensland Bishops' Catholic Schools Research Project Archdiocese of Brisbane (page 15)
 - ³ The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium Section 16, P. 20
 - ⁴ The Catholic School Section 58 p45

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