



# CESL Governance

## CESL Schools Advisory Councils - Terms of Reference

### Preamble

Catholic Education Sandhurst Limited (CESL) is the governing authority for over fifty Catholic schools within the Diocese of Sandhurst. CESL is committed to working with principals, leadership teams and local communities to support each school to thrive. A key dimension of this collaborative work is the effective operation of Advisory Councils to support the work of both the principal and CESL. These Advisory Councils are established under the authority of CESL so that the principal might receive information, support and advice from various local community members, and as a dimension of the 'line of sight' necessary for the CESL Board to undertake its responsibilities.

This document provides the Terms of Reference for the CESL School and College Advisory Councils throughout the Sandhurst Diocese, hereafter referred to as the Advisory Council. These Terms of Reference were developed with the CESL Board, CESLO executive staff and principals. Principals will be supported by CESL to ensure that their Advisory Council is an effective and efficient means of canvassing a broad range of insights and feedback about key matters relevant to each school's development.

CESL acknowledges the original custodians of the land on which each of our Schools and Colleges operate.

CESL is committed to the Victorian Child Safe Standards as provided in Ministerial Order 1359 and acknowledges that every child has the right to feel safe and be safe at all times.

### Governing Principles

CESL Advisory Councils are committed to democratic principles, consultation, dialogue and coresponsibility.

The Council is committed to the fundamental principles of Catholic Education in the Diocese of Sandhurst as articulated in the Initial Directions Statement by the Member (the Bishop of Sandhurst):

- The Mission of Catholic education is both **evangelising** and **educative**, embodying and fostering the Christian understanding of the human person.
- Respect for the dignity of each person is shown by placing the **student at the centre** of Catholic education, which strives for the integral and authentic development of each person in all the dimensions of human existence: intellectual, spiritual, emotional, bodily, relational, environmental and cultural.
- The mission CESL is undertaken as a shared ministry in which there are complimentary responsibilities belonging to a range of stakeholders:

o **Students** play an active and crucial role in their own learning

o **Parents/Carers** have the primary responsibility for the education of their children.

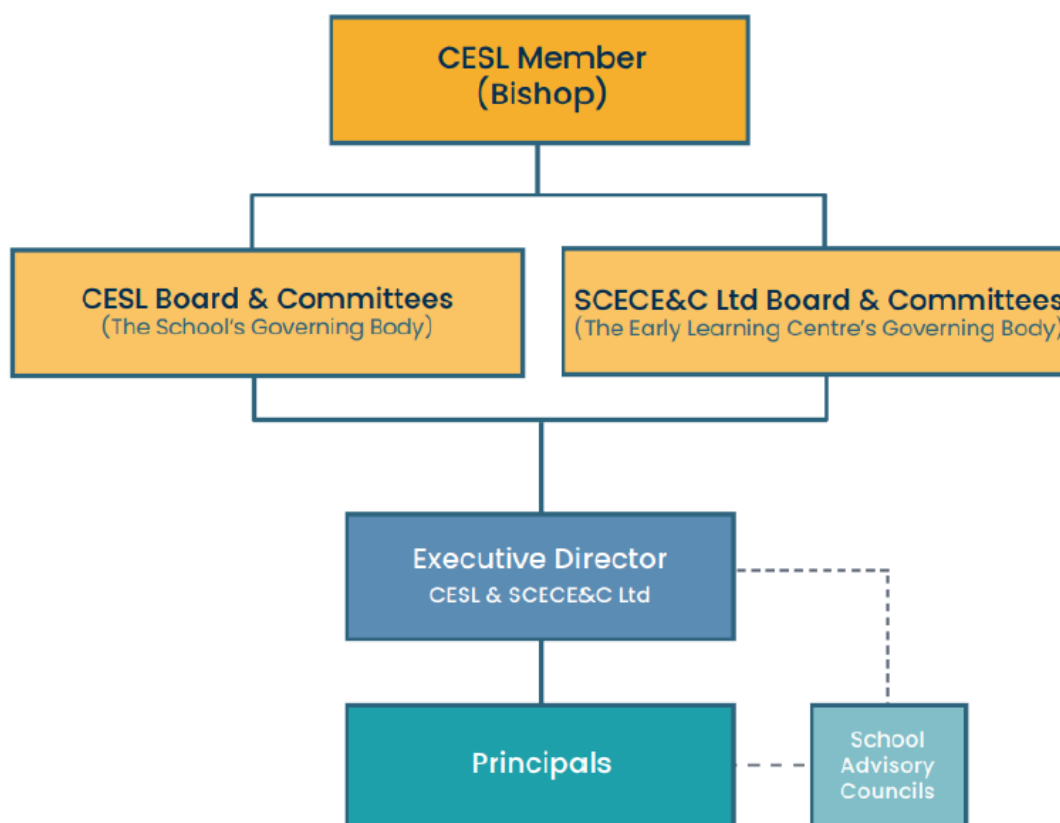
o **Parishes** have an ongoing involvement in the mission and ministry of schools facilitated through a Shared Mission Statement.

o **Leaders, Teachers and Allied staff** play a critical role in the operational dimension of education.

- Commitment to **Collaboration**, consultation and meaningful engagement with all relevant stakeholders.
- Commitment to **Catholic Social Teaching**, promoting a culture where the dignity of all, especially the most vulnerable, is protected and championed.
- Commitment to **Subsidiarity**, ensuring decisions are made where appropriate, by those closest to and most accountable to those affected.
- Commitment to **Solidarity**, recognising that we are all gifted in different ways, but called to work together for the one purpose.
- Commitment to **Quality Learning**, promoting a culture of continuous improvement and initiative in relation to student learning outcomes.
- Commitment to **Stewardship of Resources**, ensuring that all resources are used effectively and efficiently and with a view towards sustainability for future generations.

- Commitment to the **Development of Leaders** and the **Formation of All Staff** so that the Strategic Plans of CESL and the school/College can be achieved.
- Commitment to **Child Safeguarding** ensuring that all adults are aware of their safeguarding responsibilities and schools have zero tolerance for behaviours and practices that compromise or put at risk children's physical and psychological safety.

## Governance Chart



## Vision Statement

The vision for CESL is to provide, in partnership with our families and parishes, stimulating, enriching, liberating, sacramental and nurturing learning environments drawn from the Catholic tradition in each of the diocesan school communities. At the heart of this vision is our commitment to the ongoing duty of care that we have for the safety, wellbeing and inclusion of all children and young people, a pursuit of excellence in all levels of learning and creating communities of welcome, hospitality and inclusion.

We believe,

- that the values of the Gospel are central to who we are, what we do and how we act

- that we have a vital role in the mission of the Catholic Church to imagine and seek new horizons while respecting our Tradition
- that a strong sense of community is dependent on the quality of our collegial relationships
- that each person's potential is fostered through the dedicated ministry of Catholic Education in leadership encompassing vision, innovation and empowerment.

## **Responsibilities**

### **Catholic Education Sandhurst Limited**

CESL is the responsible entity for the governance and management of Catholic Schools of the Diocese of Sandhurst, including its legal and educational obligations. It is the employer of all staff within these schools and colleges and directly delegates to the Principal significant educational, administrative and operational responsibilities and accountabilities.

### **Parish Priest/Administrator**

The Parish Priest is appointed by the Bishop of Sandhurst and is responsible for the pastoral care and canonical governance of the parish. He has a key role in working with and supporting the school/college under the framework of the Shared Mission Statement between the parish and the school.

### **Principal**

The Principal is appointed by the Executive Director of CESL and is delegated with key responsibilities in the educational, administrative and operational functions of the School/College.

### **Advisory Council Scope and Purpose**

The Advisory Council serves as a consultative and advisory group for the Principal, a means through which the Board receives information and feedback from the broader school community and an active forum for parent and local community participation, providing support and advice primarily in strategic planning and school improvement, and is intended to:

- actively support, in collaboration with the local parish, the Vision and Catholic Identity of the School/College
- provide parental and local community input into strategic planning, school improvement, child safeguarding practices and school review

- support the Principal in meeting their accountabilities for educational outcomes, effective stewardship of resources, and annual reporting
- actively support the Principal in the encouragement of parent/carers engagement
- Provide a means by which the CESL Executive (and thereby the CESL Board) can dialogue with and hear from school community members

### **Members of the School/College Advisory Council acknowledge that**

- All management and operational matters (such as delivery of curriculum, human resource matters, parent complaints, programs and policies) are the responsibility of the Principal, who may seek the advice of Advisory Council members around these matters from time to time.
- Issues of a personal nature or issues involving individuals of the school community will not be raised at Advisory Council meetings
- The Principal is the spokesperson for the School/College for initiatives, announcements and issues raised in public and in the local media. No Council Member has authority to speak on behalf of the School/College or Advisory Council, unless explicitly delegated and authorised by the Executive Director of CESL.
- Members of the Advisory Council do not have the authority to expend or commit School/College funds.

### **Child Safeguarding and Code of Conduct**

All members of the Council must hold a valid Working With Children (WWC) or equivalent. Members of the Council are bound by the School/College's:

- Child Safe Policies
- Code of Conduct
- Child Safe Code of Conduct
- Professional Boundaries Policy

## **Membership**

The Advisory Council consists of no fewer than six members\* and no more than ten members, made up of the following:

### ***Advisory Council size relevant to school size***

<300 students: 6-10 members

301-650: 7-10 members

651-1000: 8-10 members

1000+: 9-10 members

*\*the minute taker will generally not be a member of the Advisory Council, nor are those who attend for part of the meeting to provide a specific report or to contribute to a specific discussion.*

***Ex officio Advisory Council Members (from two to four)***

- Principal
- Parish Priest or their delegate
- [1-2 additional roles from within the School/College Leadership Team may be added]

***Parent/Carer and Ordinary Members of the Advisory Council (from three to six)***

- Parent/Carer Members: At least half of the appointed members should come from the parent/carers community

**Ordinary Members:** Fewer than half of the appointed members can be people of expertise/skill or local knowledge (these people are not current parents/carers). Some examples might be those with marketing, architectural or community knowledge, dependent on the needs of the school at any period in time.

***Other***

- The Executive Director of CESL reserves the right to attend the Advisory Council meeting or to send a proxy in their absence. This will usually be the School Improvement Leader (SIL). The Executive Director's representative will provide a report on the meeting to the CESL Executive and as required, can also present a report on key CESL initiatives.

**Appointment of Advisory Council Members**

Prior to the expiry of the term of office for members, nominations will be invited from the community.

Nominations (which can be self-nominations) should be in writing and delivered to the principal by a designated date.

Principals will then work with their SIL to discern a representative and balanced Advisory Council to meet the needs of the principal, the school and the community at large for the coming three years.

From time to time, it may be necessary for the principal to approach members of the parent/guardian community or people of local expertise/skill to nominate for the Advisory Council. This approach should be made following discussion with the SIL.

The Principal will write to their SIL with their nominations for the Advisory Council. The SIL will make the appointment to the Advisory Council (in writing) on behalf of CESL.

## **Tenure**

Along with the parish priest (or their delegate) ex-officio members are ongoing members of the Advisory Council at the Principal or/and SIL's discretion.

Parent/Carer and Ordinary Members will serve a three-year term. Members may be re-appointed for a further (second) consecutive term at the discretion of the Principal and SIL.

It is preferable that appointed members do not serve more than two consecutive terms. However, where the Principal and SIL consider it in the best interests of the School/College for a tenure to be extended to a third term, this may be requested. Appropriate reasons may include stability of membership, for appropriate succession planning or for the achievement of a particular strategic direction.

## **Vacancies**

A vacancy will be declared when a member:

- reaches the end of a three-year term
- resigns from office by notice in writing or verbally fails to attend three consecutive meetings of the Council without proper excuse and/or apology.

When a vacancy arises, the Principal will work with the SIL to find a suitable replacement.

## **Removal**

The Principal and SIL may discern the need to terminate the membership of a Council member where serious concerns over capacity, integrity, communication style or alignment to the values of Catholic education are demonstrated. The SIL will bring this concern to the Assistant Director: School Improvement & Safeguarding for consideration and action.

## **Induction and Formation**

Advisory Council members will be required to attend an online induction conducted by CESL (help biannually). This induction will include:

- An introduction to Catholic Education Sandhurst and our schools
- These Terms of Reference
- Catholic Identity
- Child Safeguarding

Principals will meet with newly inducted Advisory Council meetings to offer them an overview of the school community, including some of the key documents and data sets that are used by the Advisory Council (e.g. Annual Action Plan, Master Plan, NAPLAN, ACER data etc.).

Advisory Council members will be invited to an annual Formation Workshop, hosted by CESL. The Workshop will be held online in the evening and a recording made available to those unable to attend. From time to time, CESL may find it necessary to host a full day workshop for Advisory Council members.

## **Council Chairperson**

The Principal, in consultation with the SIL will nominate a Chair for the Advisory Council. The person will meet with the SIL before an appointment recommendation will be taken to the Assistant Director: School improvement & Safeguarding. Their term as Chair will be for three years.

Upon the expiry of each three-year term, or earlier if the Chair is no longer a member of the Advisory Council or resigns from that position, the principal and SIL will discern the appointment of a Chair for the following three years. A member cannot ordinarily serve more than two consecutive terms as Chair, unless the Principal determines there are extenuating circumstances.

The Advisory Council Chair will facilitate meetings. In the absence of the Advisory Council Chair, this responsibility will be delegated to a person nominated by the principal.

The Chair may also be involved in setting the meeting agenda with the Principal, as deemed appropriate.

A formal meeting format will usually be followed (CESL provides a preferred meeting format and key topics for discussion).

## **Executive Officer**



The role of Executive Officer will be undertaken by the Principal, with responsibilities for preparation and distribution of agenda, minutes and other meeting papers (which they may delegate to another member of the school staff).

The recording of minutes may be delegated to another member of the Council or School/College's staff (who will not be deemed a member of the Advisory Council).

## Council Meetings

### Meeting Schedule

The Council will meet at least six times (and no more than eight time) annually according to a schedule developed at the commencement of each school year, at a time and place convenient to members as follows:

Term	Meeting #	Key focus for discussion
Term 1	Meeting 1	Annual Action Plan, VCE data from previous year
Term 2	Meeting 2	Child Safeguarding
Term 2	Meeting 3	Master Plan, Enrolment Trends and Marketing
Term 3	Meeting 4	Catholic Identity, including Shared Mission Agreement
Term 3	Meeting 5	NAPLAN analysis
Term 4	Meeting 6	CESSIS Data Analysis, Annual Report to the School Community, School Calendar

		for the following year, including pupil free days
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## Agenda

The agenda will be developed by the Principal, in consultation with the SIL and members as needed.

The Agenda should be provided to members seven days prior to the meeting. The agenda will include meeting time, date, location and all items for discussion. Where possible, supporting documentation will be forwarded with the agenda.

The Standing Agenda for CESL School Advisory Council meetings will be as follows:

### 1. Welcome (15 minutes)

- a. Acknowledgement of Country
- b. Prayer & Formation
- c. Apologies

### 2. Declarations of Interest (2 mins)

### 3. Minutes and Business Arising/Action Items from previous meeting (5 mins)

### 4. Child Safeguarding (review Victorian Child Safe Standard strategies – one standard per meeting) (10 mins)

### 5. Key Focus Report & Discussion [as noted at 6.1] (30-40 mins)

### 6. Written Principals Report (taken as read, questions = 10 mins). Headings to be used (dot points):

- a. Catholic Mission & Formation
- b. Learning & Teaching
- c. Wellbeing
- d. Leadership & Human Resources

e. Stewardship of Resources

f. Other

**7.Parish Priest report (5 mins)**

**8. CESL Representative report (5 mins)**

**9. P&F (or equivalent) report (5 mins)**

**10. Any other Business (as required)**

**11. Close**

### **Quorum**

A quorum will consist of a simple majority of all current Council Members. If a quorum is not present by 15 minutes after the scheduled starting time, the meeting will be cancelled or re- scheduled as determined by the principal.

Whenever possible, recommendations of the Council are to be reached by consensus. Though full consensus may not always be possible, members are encouraged to reflect, consult, generate ideas, consider the best interests of the School/College, and trust in the collective wisdom of the group.

### **Other**

Members must declare any potential conflict of interest and refrain from contributing to discussions if required by the Chair.

Any differences in views that the Principal or SIL feels unable to resolve following a period of discernment and prayer will be referred to the Assistant Director: School Improvement & Safeguarding for advice. Discernment may continue at the next meeting by those present, if deemed appropriate.

## **Communication**

The Council will keep minutes of meetings for circulation to members prior to the next scheduled meeting. Minutes will record discussion summaries, resolutions and names of those present. Minutes of meetings are confidential to the members of the Council.

A copy of the Minutes will be provided to CESL so that important matters can be monitored and/or tabled at CESL Executive meetings (and where necessary, passed to the CESL Board).

A summary of meaningful and non-confidential discussions or decisions from each meeting will be circulated within the School/College community by the Principal in the School/College Newsletter.

Deliberations at Advisory Council meetings are confidential to the Council with recommendations made by the Council to be fully supported by all Council members outside of meetings.

## Dispute Resolution

Council Members must be committed to timely and just resolution of any disputes or grievances and will observe and respect the following Grievance Procedures:

- Where there is difficulty, dispute or grievance involving a student or parent/legal guardian with a teacher, the issue will not be raised at a Council meeting. The parent/legal guardian will be requested to raise the matter directly with the Principal.
- Where there is difficulty, dispute or grievance between the Principal and Member of the Council, the issue will not be raised at a Council meeting. The matter will be dealt with privately between the Member of the Council and the Principal.
- If an issue concerns more than one Member of the Council, the issue will not be raised at a Council meeting. The issue will be raised individually with the Principal.
- If resolution is still required, the matter should be referred to the School Improvement Leader.

## Amendments

Amendments to the Terms of Reference should be proposed in writing to the Executive Director of CESL. Any recommended changes will not come into effect until approved by both the Principal and Executive Director, CESL.

## Review

These Terms of Reference will be reviewed every 5 years by CESL in alignment polices, guidelines or legal requirements.

**Date of Commencement:** Jan 2025

**Date Reviewed:** Nov 2024

**Due Date for Next Review: Nov 2027**