The Catholic school is an education community with Christ as its centre point and inspiration. It educates for service in faith hope and love.

(Vision: Catholic Education, Ballarat)
School Improvement Framework
Overview

Introduction

Introduced in 2007, the School Improvement Framework (SIF) is designed to assist principals in working collaboratively with leadership teams, staff and the wider school community on school improvement.

“On one hand, a faith school is a ‘civic institution’: its aims, methods and character are the same as those of every other school. On the other hand, it is a ‘Christian community’ whose educational goals are rooted in Christ and his Gospel. It is not always easy to bring these two aspects into harmony, the task requires constant attention”
(The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School, n 67 as cited in Awakenings Core Document p.42).

SIF provides a structure over a four-year cycle to focus on what is important for school improvement within the context of the school. It promotes evidence-based strategies and innovation to improve student outcomes. It encourages schools to continually ask important questions about student learning and future directions that will:

- Maximise student outcomes including intellectual, spiritual and ethical competence
- Provide effective learning and teaching
- Enhance pastoral care and wellbeing for the school community

SIF also assists the Catholic Education Office Ballarat (CEOB) in evaluating the overall progress of individual schools and for the sector, towards school improvement. It provides models of effective improvement, highlights challenges in different school contexts and insights for future sector directions and support.

Catholic School Vision

Central to the School Improvement Framework is the school vision. Within this context a Catholic School Vision (Vision) is defined as a clear educationally focused statement providing a compelling image of what the school can be and aspires to become in the future. It should:

- Reflect and express the distinctive nature of the Catholic school in the public forum
- Focus the entire school's life and programs according to the Church’s stated values
- Inspire and unify the commitment of all involved in the Catholic school community

The Vision is supported by the school’s Mission and Contextual Statements.
Key Aspects of Schooling

There is an expectation that the Catholic School Vision is firmly embedded in the five key aspects of schooling. These are:

- Catholic School Culture
- Learning and Teaching
- Student Wellbeing
- Leadership and Management
- School Community

SIF acknowledges the interdependence and connectedness of the five key aspects of schooling. Although they are represented as distinct characteristics, this is for reflection, review and reporting purposes only. The extent to which students are able to achieve their potential in terms of learning outcomes is partly dependent upon the capacity of the school to provide best possible learning environments across these key aspects of schooling.

The School Improvement Cycle

The cycle of school improvement provides specific components that are attended over four years to ensure continuous improvement. At all stages of the cycle, schools focus their reflection on where the school is currently performing across the five key aspects of schooling. This provides the opportunity for a school to gather, interpret and analyse data to determine the next steps to school improvement.

An underlying principle of the SIF is that continuous school improvement is the responsibility of all members of the school community, not just the principal or leadership team. Throughout the SIF cycle it is important that opportunities to reflect and analyse how the school is progressing towards the goals of the School Improvement Plan. Therefore, the following conditions need to be in place in each school:

- Recognition and encouragement that all staff have a leadership role in school improvement
- Planned and regular reflection on the five key aspects of schooling through dialogue with all members of the school community using a process of analysis, evaluation and recommendation
- Development of a shared language around the Vision that the school is trying to achieve over the School Improvement cycle
- Focus on the needs of all students and therefore promotion of evidence-based strategies in the local context, but with flexibility to adapt and modify directions to meet positive outcomes
- Use of evidence such as the School Improvement Survey, diocesan, state and national testing, school assessment measures (formal and informal) to assist in the development of optimal learning and teaching environments
- Participation in school professional development on using different strategies, data collection and analysis and their purposes
- Empowerment of all staff and the wider community (where relevant) in the process of SIF
Diagram 1: SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT CYCLE

Throughout the cycle of school improvement, The School Improvement Plan, Annual Action Plan, Annual Report to the Community and School Improvement Survey are important documents together with school data that assist in guiding the school throughout the School Improvement Cycle.

The School Improvement Plan is developed in the External Review Year (see Guidelines for External Review Year). This plan is drawn on evidence and analysis generated by the review process. It includes clearly articulated goals, targets and key overarching strategies for the following four years. It is important that goals, targets and key overarching strategies provide a challenging vehicle for school improvement whilst maintaining a realistic balance of what is achievable within a four year cycle. This ensures that the School Improvement Plan enables all stakeholders to be clear about what the school is aiming to achieve in the next four years and how it intends to address these goals.

The School Improvement Plan also provides the basis for the next review period. Schools are required to report against this plan in the subsequent External Review Year. The following diagram shows the relationship between the School Improvement Plan and other key documents and data throughout the School Improvement Cycle.
Diagram 2: SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PROCESS

The **Annual Action Plan** describes the key improvement strategies in the School Improvement Plan and other significant projects which will be put into operation during a given year. Such plans reflect ongoing monitoring and evaluation of strategies and adaptations to school improvement planning processes based upon the collection, interpretation and further analysis of evidence collected.

The **Annual Report to the Community** is to inform the community of the school’s progress in addressing the articulated goals, targets and overarching strategies set out in the Annual Action Plan. As part of the *School Improvement Framework*, schools report to their community on an annual basis. The report also incorporates requirements of the Australian Government regulations in accordance with the relevant sections of the *Schools Assistance (Learning Together – Achievement Through Choice and Opportunity) Act 2004*.

The **School Improvement Survey** provides key data on the health and wellbeing of the school as an organisation. The data for each school provides information around four key concepts to organisational health: *learning, clarity, leadership and empathy*. An external provider conducts the School Improvement Survey in the first and third year of the School Improvement Cycle. All staff, and a representative number of students and parents participate in the survey.

**Multiple data sources** includes school-based assessment processes and surveys. State and national testing also contribute to an evidenced-based approach which informs the School Improvement Plan within each year of the cycle.
The cycle of school improvement also incorporates a component of external objective evaluation and accountability. Within Catholic education within the Diocese of Ballarat, school improvement is underpinned by the values of faith, hope, love, service, justice, integrity, stewardship and respect. The review is undertaken by an External Reviewer and is underpinned by the principles of procedural fairness, transparency, excellence, efficiency and effectiveness (see Guidelines for External Review for further information).

See also Schedule of Review for School Improvement Cycle.

**Overview of School Responsibilities**

Each school is required to:

- Undertake an External Review of School Improvement every four years (as designated in the External Review Schedule) and participate in the reporting back to the CEOB through a visit by the Directors after the External Review
- Develop a School Improvement Plan (Appendix 3) as an outcome of the External Review
- Develop and implement an Annual Action Plan (Appendix 4) in each year of the School Improvement Cycle that is to be available to the Catholic Education Office in the beginning of Term 4 (prior to its implementation). This also includes clearly identifying any focused support required from the CEOB.
- Complete the Annual Report to the Community and make available to the school community and to the State Register within the nominated time which is a requirement of Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority
- Use multiple sources of evidence and processes of reflection and evaluation to constantly refine the steps and progress of School Improvement
- Work collaboratively with all staff and the wider school community (where appropriate) to engage in ongoing dialogue and encourage ownership of School Improvement within their context
- Participate in all the requirements of the School Improvement Survey
- Participate and implement professional development for all staff on the use and purpose of data, learning and teaching strategies and the development of leadership in School Improvement
- Seek outside advice, such as that of the Catholic Education Office, when required, in progressing School Improvement
- Inform regularly the Catholic Education Office through structures such as Education Consultant, Religious Education and Educational Services on progress and challenges towards school improvement within a context of professional dialogue and mutual support

**Catholic Education Office Ballarat (CEOB)**

The Catholic Education Office Ballarat works in partnership with schools in the implementation of the School Improvement Framework. In addition to providing models of effective improvement, informing CEOB of the challenges in different school contexts and insights for future sector directions, SIF assists the CEOB in providing focused support to schools. School support is assisted through the following CEOB structures.

**Assistant Director: School Operations** is responsible for the overall implementation and evaluation of the SIF and reporting on its progress to the School Operations Committee. This
includes: monitoring individual schools; identifying and proposing additional support to schools; sector implementation and; future sector directions. Through liaising with the Assistant Director: Educational Services, the Assistant Director: School Operations identifies additional support to individual schools that do not have a significant resource capacity to implement the recommendations of the School Improvement Plan. Any additional support would be negotiated between the CEOB and the school.

**Assistant Director: Educational Services** is responsible for providing educational support to schools based on the school improvement process and needs identified each year through each school’s Annual Action Plan and sector requirements. Through liaising with the Assistant Director: School Operations, the Assistant Director: Educational Services provides focused support to schools in the key aspects of schooling of learning and teaching and student well-being.

**Education Consultants:** The role of the Education Consultant in the SIF is to provide advice to the principal such as on the implementation of the SIF, around data and strategies to address school improvement and development of effective leadership models. The Education Consultant is an invited member of the Review Panel during the External Review visit. The Education Consultant provides regular feedback and identifies potential issues in School Improvement to the Assistant Director: School Operations.

**Education Services: Education Advisers:** The role of advisers (which includes teaching and learning, student services and wellbeing) is to support schools in specific aspects of their School Improvement Plan. This is articulated through the Annual Action Plan. The Education Advisers provide regular feedback and identify potential issues in School Improvement to the Assistant Director: Educational Services.

**Religious Education: Education Advisers:** Under the direction of the Director of Religious Education, the Religious Education Advisers support schools in the SIF in the key aspects of schooling: Catholic School Culture and Learning and Teaching. This is focused on Catholic school identity and the implementation of Awakenings. The Education Advisers provide regular feedback and identify potential issues in School Improvement to the Director: Religious Education.

**Overview of the CEOB Responsibilities**

The CEOB will:
- Provide access to the School Improvement Framework and supporting resources through web based media
- Ensure timely communication to schools regarding their participation in specific components such as the External Review Year and the School Improvement Survey
- Provide advice to school on the implementation of the School Improvement Framework through website resources and CEOB personnel such as Education Consultants and Education Advisers
- Provide an Education Consultant (and other CEOB advisers if appropriate) on the Review Panel for the External Review
- Participate in the reporting back from each school after the External Review through a visit by the Directors
• Provide professional development that assists schools in interpreting and using data and developing evidenced-based approaches to school improvement
• Provide professional development that assists schools in developing effective leadership processes and structures for school improvement
• Assist with ongoing analysis of the outcomes of the School Improvement Framework including effective support to schools and future directions
• Review every four years the implementation and resources associated with the School Improvement Framework.
External Review Year Procedures

School Improvement Framework

An important role for the school in External Review Year is the development of the School Reflection Report. This report is the key document for the External Reviewer to evaluate school improvement progress. In preparation of the report and the subsequent external review, the following provides an outline of the process for the External Review. See also the Schedule of Review for School Improvement and Accountability Cycle.

Overview of the School Review Stage

- Meeting with the Educational Consultant
- Develop Methodology and Timeline for School Process
- Participate in School Improvement Survey
- Gather evidence and analyse data sources on School Improvement
- School Reflection Report
- Meeting with External Reviewer to discuss requirements and review format
- External Review
- Development of School Improvement Plan
- Meeting with and reporting to the Directors
- Development of School Annual Action Plan
- Report to the Canonical Administrator and Community

Implementation of School Improvement Framework
Year Prior to External Review (Year 3 of Cycle):

School Improvement Survey: This is conducted early in Term 3. School will be notified by early Term 1 by CEOB of their participation, requirement regarding who, when and how the survey will be conducted. Individual schools may be contacted by the CEOB to validate information on staff, student and parent participants.

Methodology for the School Review Process: Once the data from the School Improvement Survey is received, the Principal together with Leadership team and staff need to develop a methodology outlining the process and timeline for developing the School Reflection Report. It is important that the process allows opportunities all staff members and the wider community (as appropriate) to participate and lead in its development. In developing the methodology, a process of analysing multiple data sources needs to be taken into consideration. The timeline needs to allow for adequate time for the school to effectively consult and complete the School Reflection Report.

The Education Consultant (CEOB) should be informed of the process and timeline. The Education Consultant can play a role in providing advice and examples of different methodologies that may assist in formulating an approach for the school. The Canonical Administrator and the School Board should also be informed and given opportunities to provide input and clarify any issues.

External Review Year (Year 4 of Cycle):

School Reflection Report
A School Reflection Report consists of the following sections:

- Executive Summary
- Methodology
- School Context
- Reflection on Performance

These reports are intended to be concise with a recommended length of 15 – 20 pages, written in plain language and avoiding educational jargon. Although schools are required to utilise data in this report, it is not necessary to present lengthy descriptions of particular data outcomes for different year levels, or subject strands. Interpretation and appropriate analysis of trend data is most relevant for the report. Evidence of the use of reports such as CEVN-ISS SIR, VCE, VCAL results, NAPLAN, Literacy and Numeracy data is a requirement of all reports. Support will be provided to schools to gather, interpret and analyse multiple data sources including the School Improvement Survey.

Schools are encouraged to supplement the School Improvement Survey with additional data collected by the school as they reflect on how well they are performing. Schools may wish to ensure the availability of more comprehensive evidence to assist in the External School Review process, but this should not be submitted with the report.

Within the Reflection on Performance section of the report, schools are asked to reflect upon a series of questions across the five key aspects of schooling. To assist with the completion of this report, the Self Review Instrument for Catholic Schools has been developed. This
instrument outlines various components of the five key aspects of schooling which will assist dialogue within the Leadership Team and between Principal and Education Consultant.

**Role of External Reviewer**

An accredited School Reviewer will conduct the External School Review over a two-day visit. The reviewer will meet (Pre-Visit) with the principal early in that year to discuss the format and requirements of the review.

The role of the Reviewer is to critique the performance data, evidence and any additional information gathered by the school relevant to their *School Reflection Report*. Further information and evidence will be sought via the meetings with appropriate school personnel.

The Reviewer provides a critique of the school’s *School Reflection Report* commenting on the extent to which evidence demonstrates the schools’ achievement and recommending refinements or further development to be considered in the formation of the ensuing *School Improvement Plan*. An *External School Review Report* will be prepared for the School and the Director of Catholic Education, Ballarat and provides a basis for further dialogue with the Education Consultant.

In assisting the Reviewer, Principals will need to ensure:

- The External School Reviewer receives the *School Reflection Report* at least two weeks prior to the panel meeting.
- A timetable for the review is negotiated between the Principal and the Reviewer. This schedule should include meetings with the Canonical Administrator, the Principal, Leadership Team, Staff, School Board and Students. The Education Consultant is also expected to be part of the panel discussions (Day 2) to assist the school in its school improvement planning processes following review.

Further details are provided in Appendix 1: External Review Program

**School Improvement Plan**

Upon the completion of the *School Reflection Report* and *External School Review*, schools are required to develop their *School Improvement Plan*. This plan is drawn on evidence and analysis generated by the review process. It includes clearly articulated goals, targets and key overarching strategies for the following four years. It is important that goals, targets and key overarching strategies provide a challenging vehicle for school improvement whilst maintaining a realistic balance of what is achievable within a four year cycle. This ensures that the *School Improvement Plan* enables all stakeholders to be clear about what the school is aiming to achieve in the next four years and how it intends to address these goals.

CEOB staff will be available to support each school in the development of *School Improvement Plans* at the invitation of the Educational Consultant.
**Annual Action Plan**

The Annual Action Plan describes the key improvement strategies in the School Improvement Plan and other significant projects which will be put into operation during a given year. Such plans reflect ongoing monitoring and evaluation of strategies and adaptations to school improvement planning processes based upon the collection, interpretation and further analysis of evidence collected.

**Annual Report to the Community**

The Annual Report to the Community is completed in each year of the School Improvement Cycle. It must be available to the school (such a school website, Board meeting or information board) and the State Register within the timeline nominated by the CEOB for each year.

**Meeting with the Director**

At the conclusion of the review process, the Principal and Canonical Administrator will meet with the Director of Catholic Education, Ballarat and other relevant personnel, including the Director of Religious Education. At this meeting the dialogue is focused on the School Improvement Plan and what has been achieved. This is an opportunity to ensure that the school improvement planning processes are being implemented, identify further support required by the school and allow the Director to determine resource allocation for the following year.
EXTERNAL REVIEW PROCESS

PRIMARY and SECONDARY SCHOOLS

Pre – Visit:
School reviewers will undertake a pre-visit to the school prior to the scheduled School Review. This visit should be negotiated with the school Principal, however it should occur at least two weeks prior to the Review. The pre-visit is an opportunity for the School Reviewer and the Principal to meet and clarify expectations for the review visit. It is not necessary to include other school personnel at this time. The pre-visit will normally include the following elements:

- A visit of approximately two hours
- A tour of the school
- Consultation and negotiation of the program for the review visit

Two weeks prior to the scheduled School Review, a hard copy of the following should be provided to the Reviewer:

All Schools:

- School Reflection Report
- Previous School Improvement Plan and External Reviewer Report
- Annual Action Plan and Annual Reports to the School Community (since last external review)
- School Vision and Mission Statements
- School Improvement Survey Data Report
- VCAA NAPLAN Data Reports (Selection for All Students – Reports 3, 5, 6 7 all Reports 8) (four years data)
- SIR Reports (NAPLAN, Enrolment, Accreditation, Report on School Performance)
- Reporting against the State/national Standards (distribution of ABCDE)

Primary Schools

- Numeracy Data (Interviews)
- SIR Reports (AIM, Literacy 1 – text, Enrolment, Accreditation, Report on School Performance)

Secondary Schools

- VCAA VCE/VET/VCAL Data Reports
- On Track Data Reports (four years data)

Schools should also include any other data which they think will be critical for the School Reviewer to have access; however, it is important that any data provided to School Reviewers should be aggregated rather than individual reports which should not be included unless requested by the School Reviewer. The School Reviewer may request further data at the pre-visit or during the review period.

N.B. If the School Reviewer visits earlier than two weeks prior to the review date, there is no expectation to have all documentation ready at that time.
The External Review Program:
The specific program for the Review visit will be negotiated as part of the pre-visit and would normally include the following:

Meetings with relevant representatives of the school community:
- Leadership Team
- REC leader/s
- Literacy and Numeracy leaders
- Teaching and Learning leader/s
- Wellbeing leader/s
- Focus Groups – Parents, Teachers, Students
- Parish Priest/Canonical Administrator
- Visits to Classrooms

Meeting chaired by the School Reviewer with a School Panel including:
- Principal
- Deputy Principal
- Parish Priest/Canonical Administrator
- Parent/Board Representative
- Teacher Representative/s (Relevant to the specific areas of review)
- Education Consultant

N.B. External Reviewer must be advised who will be interviewed/present for the review prior to the Review

Agenda for Review Meeting:
- Discussion Session/Introduction – at the discretion of the School Reviewer
- Discussion of each section of the School Reflection Report
- Develop Recommendations for the School Improvement Plan
- Provide feedback to panel for Community Meeting

The Review Report:
- Within 35 days of the School Review Visit, a draft report will be forwarded to the school Principal
- The Principal is asked to check the report for errors (e.g. factual errors and appropriate terminology in wording of recommendations) and return it to the School Reviewer within 2 – 3 days.
- Following feedback from the Principal, the School Reviewer will complete the report which is forwarded to CEOB
- A copy of the final report is provided to the Principal and will also be forwarded to the Directors of CEOB.

Reporting to the School:
- The School Reviewer will provide a verbal report to Staff and Education Board. In the absence of a Board meeting, the findings will be directed to the Parish Priest/Canonical Administrator.