



CATHOLIC
DIOCESE
of
BALLARAT
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DIOCESE OF BALLARAT CATHOLIC EDUCATION LIMITED

PARTNERING: A STEP FURTHER

STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS 2020-2024



AS PARTNERS IN CATHOLIC EDUCATION AND OPEN TO
GOD'S PRESENCE, WE PURSUE FULLNESS OF LIFE FOR ALL

In educating a balance must be maintained,
your steps must be well balanced,
one step on the cornice of safety but the other into the zone of risk.
And when the risk becomes safe, the next step must venture
into another area of risk.

Education cannot be confined to the safety zone.
No. This would mean preventing personalities from developing.
Yet, it is not possible to educate solely in the risk zone either,
this is too dangerous.

It is a balance of steps, remember it well.

I also want to encourage you, educators, to seek
new, unconventional forms of education,
so as to comply with the needs of places, times and people.

Always go a step further
and never be satisfied with conventional things.
Seek new forms in accordance with the places, times and people.
I encourage you to do this.

– Pope Francis, 2013



Acknowledgements

We would like to acknowledge and thank:

- Dr Patricia Hindmarsh for her work in leading and managing the process of consultation, planning and discernment.
- Mrs Eileen Rice, Sr Helen Nolan rsm, Fr Matt Thomas and Mr Peter Morgan for their contribution as members of the Working Party.

Message from the Bishop

In my student days, we had a philosophy teacher who used to quote Latin proverbs. One of his favourite sayings was “*Parvus error in principio magnus est in fine*”. This might be translated as “A small error in the beginning becomes a large error in the end”. We might think of someone shooting an arrow at a target. As they take aim, they need to point the arrow in exactly the right direction if they are going to hit the mark. If they point the arrow just one centimetre off line, the arrow could be a long way off target when it lands. We can apply this to many areas of life. If we are aiming to achieve some goal, it is important to line up the target carefully to start with. Otherwise we might miss the target altogether.

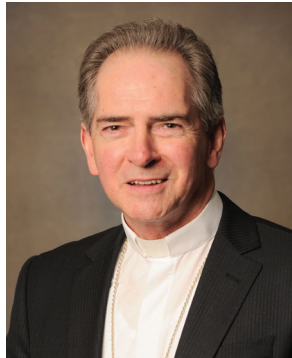
In formulating strategic directions for Catholic education in our diocese, we are seeking to express our goals as clearly as possible and point our services in the right direction to achieve those goals.

The central aim is summed up in the statement of our diocesan education vision: “As partners in Catholic education and open to God’s presence, we pursue fullness of life for all”. This echoes the words of Jesus, “I have come that they may have life and have it to the full.” (John 10:10) The strategies include enhancing the partnerships between students, teachers, parents, priests and parishioners in our local faith communities; affirming effective methods of teaching and learning and also promoting fresh methods that respond to new needs and opportunities; and encouraging everyone involved with our schools to be continual learners.

I thank all those who have contributed to the consultations about this document. May this text provide a reference point for each of our schools as they formulate their own detailed goals and strategies for the years ahead. May these Strategic Directions help us all stay on target in our efforts to share Christ’s fullness of life with everyone in our community.



Paul Bird CSsR
Bishop of Ballarat



Message from the Director

Many voices have been heard in the consultation meetings leading up to the development of these Strategic Directions, *Partnering: A Step Forward*. We are grateful to those who provided feedback, which included both affirmation and advice. The Planning Group has listened carefully to all those who contributed. The five key Strategic Priorities have resulted from processes of both speaking out and attentive listening. This focus will form the basis of our systemic strategic direction over the next four years.

It is a tribute to all responsible for Catholic schooling that so many positive and encouraging words have been spoken. Alongside this, the constructive, well-considered advice that has been received is an indication of a healthy commitment to the future of our Catholic schools, which are recognised as more significant now than ever in this changing, contemporary world. Participants in the process, including parents, staff and pastors, have expressed great faith and hope in Catholic education across the Diocese.



Tom Sexton
Chief Executive Officer
Diocese of Ballarat Catholic Education Limited



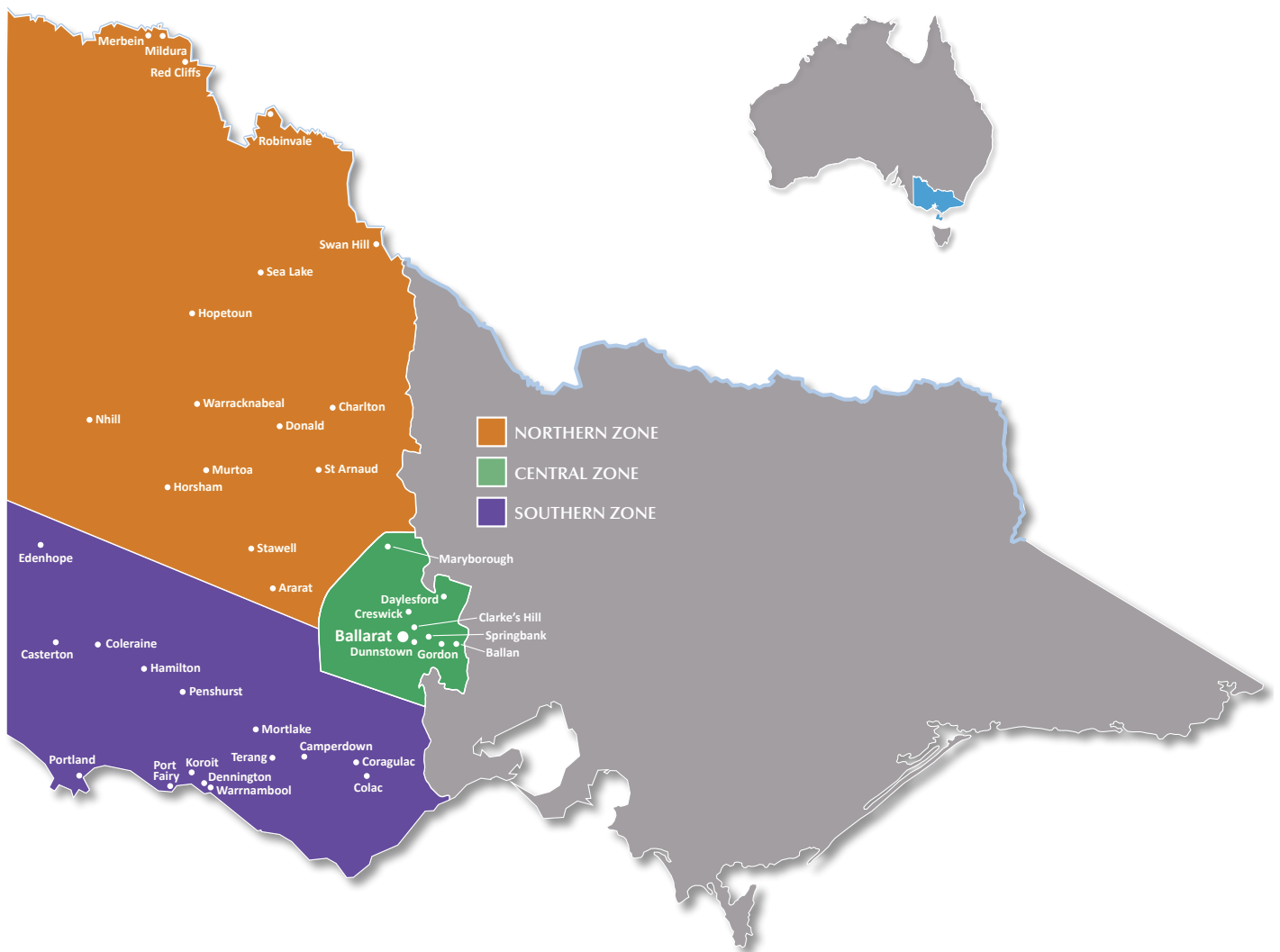
OUR DIOCESAN EDUCATION COMMUNITY

The Diocese of Ballarat has 64 diverse primary and secondary schools in total, providing distinctive Catholic education in rural and regional settings from the Murray to the Sea.

The Diocese is divided into the Northern, Southern and Central zones and has over 18,000 students enrolled in 52 Primary Schools (F-6), one Foundation to Year 8 School and 11 Secondary Schools (7-12).

Our Vision

As partners in Catholic education and open to God's presence, we pursue fullness of life for all.



STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS BACKGROUND

The Diocese of Ballarat, stretching from the Murray to the Sea, covers a vast area and includes diverse communities. We rightly celebrate Catholic education with its system of sixty-four flourishing Catholic schools scattered across the Diocese. Equally, we ask how we can consolidate and creatively partner together to continue improving the quality of our schools.

During 2019, opportunities for consultation were offered to express future hopes and aspirations for Catholic education. Meetings were held in several centres, including:

- Ararat
- Hamilton
- Horsham
- Warrnambool
- Colac
- Halls Gap
- Swan Hill
- Mildura
- Ballarat

Those present expressed that in small, remote and regional schools, signs of hope remained for families in times of drought and social challenge, and that larger, increasingly multi-cultural schools and colleges are offering quality education for a changing world in cities and regional towns.

Parishes and schools are working in partnership. Families are confident to entrust their children to our schools, which they see as compassionate, caring communities offering excellent learning opportunities. There was an expressed appreciation of Catholic faith and life, and the Gospel spirit that characterises our schools, which one parent described as, 'The jewel in the crown' of the Diocese. There is joy in the openness and welcoming nature of Catholic schools to all who present for enrolment, regardless of their background.

Parents, priests and staff identified the following pressing signs of the times which are impacting families and schools:

- The drought, which is affecting family finances and wellbeing
- The digital world, as both opportunity and great challenge
- The crisis of clerical sexual abuse
- The state of our planet
- The diversity of ethnic and religious background of students
- Economic growth and inequity
- Mental health challenges
- The 'consumer' society
- The unrealistic expectations that families sometimes place on their children and on staff

People expressed confidence that Catholic schools in our diocese are facing these challenges and are providing safe, respectful, inclusive and high quality learning environments that young people need.

The areas identified for change and improvement through the consultations are reflected in the five Priority Areas of these Strategic Directions and the global intents related to each of the Priorities.

These Strategic Directions, titled *Partnering: A Step Further*, have drawn inspiration from our Diocesan Education Vision and Mission Statements, which require us to act as 'partners' in Catholic education.

Over the next four years, we have a moral imperative to raise the bar for all students and to close the gap for lower performing groups, relative to the higher order skills and competencies required to be successful world citizens. It is the intention that schools and the Catholic Education Office will use these Strategic Directions as a 'touchstone' document in preparing their own goals and strategies. *Partnering: A Step Further* will inform local School Improvement Plans, Annual Action Plans and Position Descriptions.

Partnering: A Step Further is intended both as a means to unify the overall direction and ensure equity in the allocation of resources for Catholic schools in the Ballarat Diocese, while respecting their autonomy to respond to the needs of their unique context.

PARTNERSHIPS

Our Diocesan Education Vision states that, *“as partners in Catholic Education and open to God’s presence, we pursue fullness of life for all”*. The contemporary contexts of which Catholic Education is integrally a part, present opportunities and challenges that require new learning, new leaderships and new ways of being with each other. Research indicates that if education systems are flourishing in these changing and complex environments, then all within the system need to be dynamically connected and in partnership with each other, as they strive to bring the vision to life for all.

As partners *and* in partnership we have the opportunity to create a highly effective and flourishing system that:

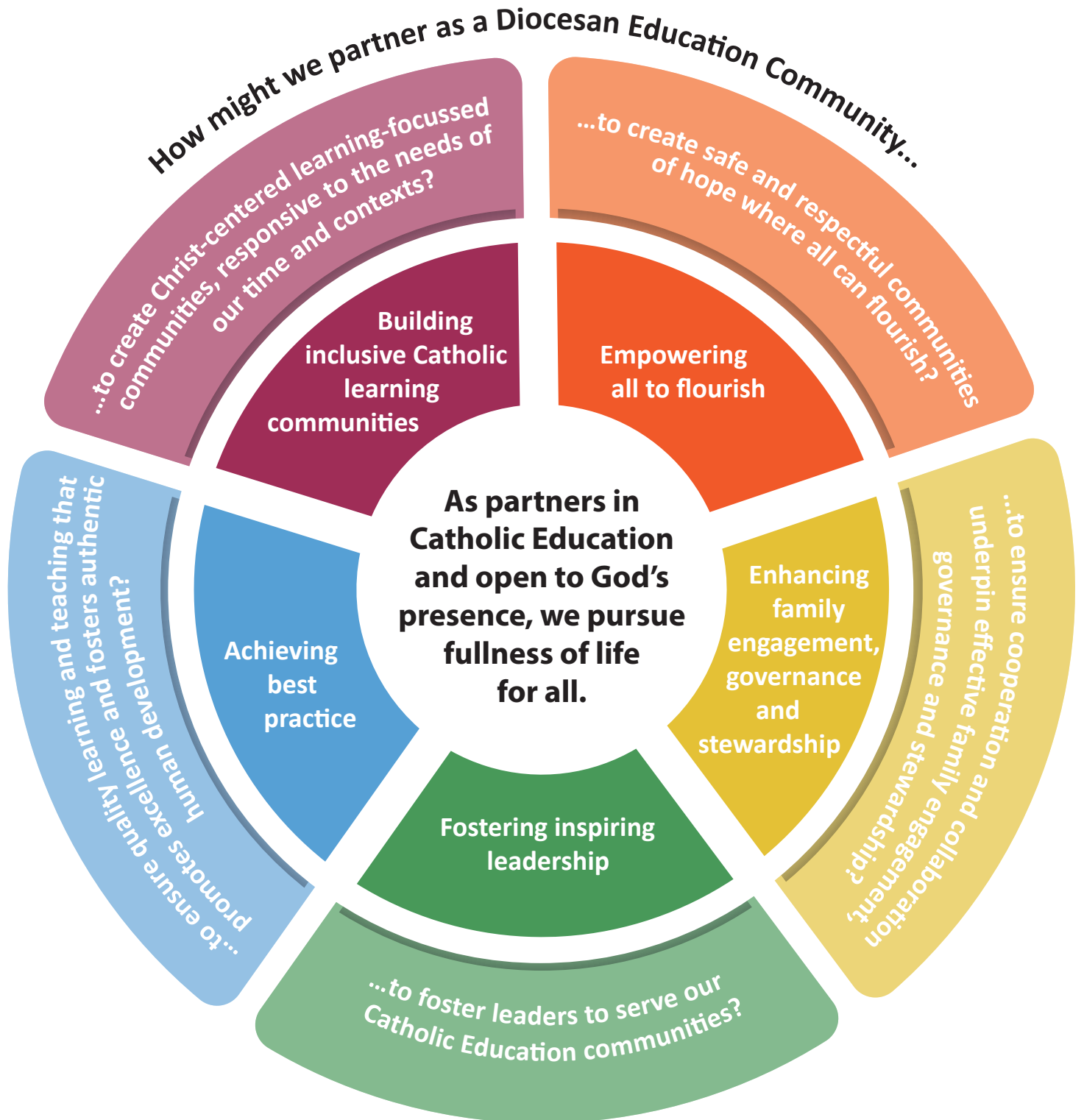
- Engages deeply with its moral purpose to ensure that all young people in our school communities become creative, adaptable, self-motivated learners who achieve their full potential in all aspects of learning.
- Inspires and supports leaders continually to develop their knowledge and capacities, and in turn, strengthens the collective expertise of leaders across the system in improving learning for all young people in our school communities.
- Values sustained opportunities for professional learning for all educators.
- Engages in collaborative evidence-informed professional inquiry that creates new knowledge and innovative practices in response to local and system contexts and needs.

- Focuses on discerned system priorities and initiatives that respond to local and system contexts and offer authentic opportunities to partner in achieving excellence in learning for all young people.

Partnerships are focussed on the following:

- Mutual benefit, where all are learning with and from each other, sharing collective expertise and evidence informed practices through inquiry approaches to professional learning.
- Transparency, where all are committed to improvement processes that are clear in purpose, are positive in intent and support the collective learning of the system as a whole.
- Relationships of trust that respect diversity of perspective within the context of system, zone, network, cluster or individual school community projects or initiatives.

It is the intent of these Strategic Directions to offer inspiration *“as partners in Catholic Education and open to God’s presence”* to *“pursue fullness of life for all”* more intentionally.



Introduction

The five priorities were discerned following the diocesan consultation processes:

- Empowering all to flourish
- Building inclusive Catholic learning communities
- Achieving best practice
- Fostering inspiring leadership
- Enhancing family engagement, governance and stewardship

The following questions are offered as a further opportunity for school communities to engage with the questions that were raised in the broader education community of the Catholic Diocese of Ballarat, as schools discern and respond to local needs and contexts.



Empowering all to flourish



How might we partner as a Diocesan Education Community to create safe and respectful communities of hope where all can flourish?

- How might we create cultures of respect, trust and safety where the human dignity of each person is embraced and celebrated?
- How might we create and nurture communities of inclusivity and belonging where all are known and understood, in particular the most vulnerable in our communities?
- How might we foster authentic partnerships that foster relationships of mutual benefit, equity and transparency that are anchored in the wellbeing of all?
- How might we create cultures of learning where all are invited to have an authentic voice and to be agents of their learning?
- How do we bring attention to ways of being and participating in online spaces that are safe and respectful?

Building inclusive Catholic learning communities



How might we partner to create Christ-centered learning-focussed communities, responsive to the needs of our time and contexts?

- How might we design and offer opportunities for deeply understanding the Catholic Tradition and create the conditions for developing confidence in our emerging Catholic Identity?
- How might we come to understand deeply and enact the findings of the Enhancing Catholic School Identity (ECSI) data, in partnership and in dialogue, with our faith communities?
- How might we prioritise and offer opportunities for personal and professional dialogue that invites a deep engagement with the Mission for all?
- How might we design and offer professional learning opportunities that empower and skill all within our system to enact the *Awakenings* curriculum in ways that are meaningful to all learners and enable them to achieve fullness of life?

Achieving best practice



How might we partner as a Diocesan Education Community to ensure quality learning and teaching that promotes excellence and fosters authentic human development?

- How do we enact pedagogical approaches that ensure each young person achieves their optimal growth and development, across all dimensions of learning?
- How can we create the conditions where young people are positioned as active agents in their own learning – where they are offered optimal voice, choice and power – as partners in their learning with peers and adults?
- How might we create a culture of innovation and creativity that is responsive to the complexity and diversity of the learning needs of young people?
- How do we create authentic partnerships of learning across our system that provide opportunities for collaboration, inquiry and innovation?
- How can we ensure that our practice is evidence based and data informed?



Fostering inspiring leadership



How might we partner as a Diocesan Education Community to foster leaders who serve our Catholic Education communities?

- How might we create a system wide culture of leading that fosters connected and sustainable leadership growth and development, now and into the future?
- How might we provide diverse and ongoing opportunities for learning and development, where leaders are empowered to lead their own learning, in the context of their faith communities?
- How might we actively seek dynamic and emergent ways of partnering with a focus on creating new knowledge and enacting new patterns of working, learning and leading across the system?
- How might we enact innovative and creative organisational structures (connections and relationships) that provide the space necessary for adaptive responses to enacting our Diocesan Education Mission?
- How do we meet the diverse leadership needs and ensure the sustainable use of resources across the Diocese?

Enhancing family engagement, governance and stewardship



How might we partner as a Diocesan Education Community to ensure cooperation and collaboration underpin effective family engagement, governance and stewardship?

- How might we develop authentic partnerships based on mutual trust and respect that connect families, schools and parishes?
- How can we actively engage, challenge and support families in the learning process?
- How do we support families in the transition points of schooling i.e. Kindergarten to School, Primary to Secondary, Secondary to Tertiary?
- How do we ensure that partnerships and communication exist between the various governing authorities?
- How do we ensure effective governance policies, procedures and relationships?
- How might we ensure that effective delegations and accountability policies and processes are in place to ensure the safety of all?
- How do we ensure practices of effective financial management, capital development and stewardship of all resources?



DIOCESE OF BALLARAT CATHOLIC EDUCATION LIMITED

Diocese of Ballarat Catholic Education Limited

5 Lyons Street South, Ballarat

P 03 5337 7135 | E director@ceob.edu.au | W www.dobcel.org.au

Printed on environmentally friendly paper