Cyclic Review Guidelines for School Review and Improvement in Catholic Systemic Schools
Diocese of Wollongong
October 2011
School Review & Improvement Cyclic Review

The Purpose of Cyclic Review

Cyclic Review is a significant part of school review and improvement. It reflects the shared endeavour between system schools and the Diocese of Wollongong, Catholic Education Office. The process is designed to support the school community’s mission to improve student learning and personal growth.

The purpose of the Cyclic Review is to:

- affirm, challenge and endorse the effectiveness of the school’s improvement processes
- provide an opportunity for reflection on the strategic direction of the school’s plans within the context of the school, system and Diocesan priorities.

The Cyclic Review process is particularly designed to provide:

- opportunities for professional dialogue with external experienced educators who are acting in the capacity of ‘critical friends’
- information that assists the Catholic Education Office resource the needs of system schools for ongoing school improvement
- evidence to support the quality of schooling required under legislative accountability requirements
- opportunities to observe, collect and share good practice.

The Role of Cyclic Review

The Framework for School Review and Improvement (SRI) How Effective is our Catholic School?, clearly places the main responsibility for school effectiveness with the Principal and the school community. All schools are required to use the self-assessment guidelines provided in this key document. These guidelines identify 7 Key Areas with a total of 30 Components, each with specific Indicators of Effectiveness. All schools are expected to undertake an annual assessment of selected SRI components and to internally evaluate their effectiveness across all 30 components over a 5 year review cycle.

A significant requirement of the improvement process is that schools participate in a Cyclic Review at a negotiated time once in each 5 year cycle. The Cyclic Review complements the school’s improvement efforts. The Cyclic Review Report provides clear feedback about the school’s processes and future directions but is not intended as an audit.

Consequently the Cyclic Review will not re-validate the ratings determined by the school and confirmed with their Head of School Services.
Integrated Processes

Although *The Catholic Education Office Lighting the Way, Strategic Direction 2011 and beyond* and *How Effective is Our Catholic School?* are quite separate documents intended for different audiences, they share a similar framework. Specifically they are both aimed at improving outcomes for students.

*The Catholic Education Office Lighting the Way, Strategic Direction 2011 and beyond* is linked to the School Review and Improvement process through strategic intent statements that identify the system’s responsibility and determination to support schools with implementation.

The School Review and Improvement Framework supports compliance procedures and provides additional evidence to the system that its schools are meeting all legislative and other Diocesan accountabilities.

The Cyclic Review Report will also inform Professional Development Planning and Review processes in schools.

Frequency of Cyclic Reviews

All schools will take part in a Cyclic Review during the 5 year cycle. The nature of the review means that it can reasonably occur at any point in the cycle. There is no necessity to complete an evaluation of all components before undertaking a Cyclic Review. Schools who undertake a Cyclic Review early in the cycle will have completed only a few components and those later in the cycle more. This will be taken into account in discussion with the Cyclic Review Team.

The timing of the review will be negotiated through the Head of School Services and Professional Officer, Strategic Planning and Accountabilities.

The timing of the review will also take into account the circumstances of individual school communities, the system’s requirement for all schools to undertake a review during the 5 year cycle and the system’s capacity to resource reviews.

Support for Schools

Schools will be supported throughout the Cyclic Review by:

- the Head of School Services
- the CEO Professional Officer, Strategic Planning & Accountabilities who has responsibility for administration of School Review & Improvement
- the development of support documentation and templates
- limited teacher release days to be negotiated with their Head of School Services.
Cyclic Review Team Size and Composition

The membership of the Cyclic Review Team will be determined by the size and circumstances of the school. The Cyclic Review Team members will be negotiated between the Head of School Services, Principal and the Professional Officer. As a guide:

- Primary schools will usually have a Review Team of up to four members
- Secondary schools will usually have a Review Team of between four and six members.

The duration of the Cyclic Review visit will normally be one day.

The composition of the Cyclic Review Team will normally comprise:

- a Facilitator who will lead the Cyclic Review Team and act as Chairperson
- the school’s Head of School Services (who may not act as the Facilitator), and
- and other members who may be selected from:
  - CEO Leadership Team
  - a peer Principal
  - a specialist in a particular area the school has determined as a planning priority
  - an educator, external to the Wollongong Diocesan school system.

The organisation and administration of Cyclic Reviews is the responsibility of the Professional Officer, Strategic Planning & Accountabilities, in consultation with the Principal and relevant Head of School Services.

Cyclic Review Team Preparation

Prior to the Cyclic Review visit, Cyclic Review Team members will be expected to attend a preparation session that will include the following:

- explanation of the purpose and process of the Cyclic Review visit
- clarification of the roles and responsibilities of Cyclic Review Team members
- clarification of the protocols including confidentiality and potential conflicts of interest
- examination and analysis of documentation and data presented by the school
- discussion of the issues and development of deep questions for further exploration during the Cyclic Review visit.
Structure of the Cyclic Review Visit

The timetable for the day needs to provide opportunities for the Cyclic Review Team to engage with the school community and sufficient time for reflection and discussion.

The Cyclic Review visit will comprise the following sections:

- welcome, hospitality and orientation (approx 30 mins)
- review of the school’s improvement processes to date (approx 1hr)
- engagement with the school community (approx 2hrs)
- reflection on the future directions of the School’s Improvement Plan (SIP) (approx 1hr)
- Review Team reflections (approx 1 hr).

School Cyclic Review Report Template and Evidence

In preparation for the Cyclic Review visit the school is expected to complete and submit a brief Cyclic Review Report on the template provided.

The elements of the Report are:

- School Profile – detailing major demographics and key data about the school and its community
- School Improvement Context – this is an opportunity for schools to provide contextual information relevant to the school’s improvement plans. This should not repeat the information provided in the School Profile.
- Community Engagement – a statement of how the various members of the school community have engaged in the school improvement processes used to capture their input
- Qualitative and Quantitative Data – information about the range of evidence used to develop the school view about the effectiveness of its school improvement initiatives
- The future directions identified in the school’s School Review and Improvement Plan.

Documentation

Prior to the visit the school is expected to provide the Facilitator and the Cyclic Review Team with the following evidence:

- the School’s Self Review Report
- the School Improvement Plan including the Annual Action Plans for the current cycle
- the two most recent Annual School Reports to the community
• an analysis of the relevant student learning data and subsequent impact on learning and teaching
• other data and analysis that provides information on student outcomes.

All documentation must be provided electronically at least 4 weeks prior to the Cyclic Review visit.

During the visit, the Cyclic Review Team will have the opportunity to build on its understanding of the school’s improvement journey and its culture through engagement with the school community.

Opportunities should be provided for the Cyclic Review Team to:

• discuss with the Principal and Leadership Team, their reflections on the learning improvement journey
• undertake well focused learning walks including visits to learning spaces
• interview selected members of the school community, including Parish Priest/s, parents, students and staff.

Less formal experiences could include hospitality with the staff, attendance at a routinely scheduled assembly or other regular activity. These experiences should not be distracting to the process nor erode the time of the scheduled Cyclic Review Team program. The overall school program will be drawn up by the Principal, in discussion with the Professional Officer and the school’s own Head of School Services.

**Protocols for the Cyclic Review Team**

All members of a Cyclic Review Team (CRT) are required to:

• approach their role with a sense of preparedness. This includes ensuring a familiarity with the Diocesan Cyclic Review Process, specific aspects of responsibility and careful reading of the school’s Cyclic Review Report and other evidence provided prior to the school visit
• perform their role with a sense of integrity and sensitivity. The best interest of the school and staff must be integral to the approach taken to all aspects of the Review
• consider all proceedings and school based information associated with the Cyclic Review visit with total confidentiality. This includes issues addressed during staff discussions, professional dialogue and judgements made regarding the school implementation and strategic direction
• carry out all aspects of the role with honesty, treating all those met with courtesy and sensitivity
• communicate professional findings clearly and purposefully
• report as a member of a team ensuring reflections are noted honestly, fairly and judgements are accurate and consistent
• ensure that strengths are noted in a manner that affirms the work of the school
• refer all matters of concern or areas for clarification to the Cyclic Review Team Facilitator.

Procedural Fairness and Appeals

The conduct and planning of reviews is negotiated between the Principal, Head of School Services and the Professional Officer*. Generally any concerns can be addressed informally and subsequently resolved during this consultation and planning stage.

*Note: If the Professional Officer is a member of the Cyclic Review Team relating to an appeal then another designated senior educator would be appointed to manage the appeal process. In the unlikely event that this situation arises the Head of Strategic Planning & Accountabilities Team would make this decision.

Prior to the Cyclic Review

In the event of an unresolved dispute, regarding the selection Cyclic Review Team members or the proposed structure and conduct of the Review, the Principal of the school concerned should submit a formal written appeal through the Professional Officer to the Director of Schools. The Director will inform the Principal of the decision in writing as soon as possible prior to the proposed Cyclic Review visit.

During the Cyclic Review Visit

Similarly, for any grievance or dispute regarding the conduct of the visit or the preliminary feedback provided by the Cyclic Review Team on the day of the visit, the Principal of the school concerned should initially discuss the matter with the Facilitator. Generally these concerns can be addressed informally and subsequently resolved prior to the writing of the formal report. If they are not able to be resolved during the Cyclic Review visit, the Principals should address any concerns on receipt of the draft Cyclic Review report and follow subsequent processes.

Following Receipt of the Draft Cyclic Review Report

Once the Principal has received the Draft Report, any concerns should be addressed to the Cyclic Review Team Facilitator.

The Final Report

The Principal may submit a formal written appeal should there be any significant issues unresolved. The appeal will be submitted on the appropriate pro-forma to
the Professional Officer. The appeal will then be directed to the Facilitator of the Cyclic Review Team who will respond in writing within 10 days. Should there be no resolution within 10 days the matter will be referred to the Director of Schools. The Director may deem it necessary to form an Appeals Panel who will conduct a formal review of the grounds for appeal. Should a formal review be conducted it would generally be chaired by an educator external to the Diocese. The composition of the panel and terms of reference will be determined according to the nature of the dispute. The Director will inform the Principal of the decision in writing as soon as possible.

Roles

The Principal

The Principal is responsible for:

- ensuring that all aspects of the school’s current internal Cyclic Review have been undertaken according to the School Review and Improvement Guidelines: How Effective is our Catholic School?
- ensuring that all members of the school community understand the purpose and processes of the Cyclic Review visit
- liaising with the Head of School Services and Professional Officer, regarding all organisational and administrative matters relating to the Cyclic Review visit, including dates, Cyclic Review Team composition, and structure of the visit
- leading the school community through the Cyclic Review process, including preparation and submission of all required documentation by the due date.

The Head of School Services

The Head of School Services is responsible for:

- ensuring that all aspects of the school’s current School Improvement journey have been undertaken according to the School Review and Improvement Guidelines: How Effective is our Catholic School?
- validating the Component Ratings that have been assessed by the school as part of their school improvement journey
- liaison with the Principal and Professional Officer, regarding all organisational and administrative matters relating to the Cyclic Review visit, including dates, Cyclic Review Team composition, and the structure of the visit
- ensuring the school is adequately prepared for the Cyclic Review visit
- contributing to the deliberations of the Cyclic Review Team through their unique perspective of the school.
The Professional Officer

The Professional Officer is responsible for:

- ensuring that appropriate documentation and guidelines are available to support the school with the Cyclic Review
- liaison with the Principal and Head of School Services regarding all organisational and administrative matters relating to the Cyclic Review visit, including dates, Cyclic Review Team composition, and structure of the visit
- facilitating briefings and support arrangements for both the school and Cyclic Review Team
- ensuring all school and Cyclic Review Reports are completed in a timely manner.

The Facilitator

The Facilitator acts as the Cyclic Review Team Chairperson and is responsible for:

- ensuring the professional conduct of the Cyclic Review visit according to the established guidelines
- liaising with the Principal regarding variations to the program or conduct of the visit
- completing the Review Report, in full consultation with other team members, and forwarding it in a timely manner to the Director of Schools through the Professional Officer.

Cyclic Review Team Members

Cyclic Review Team members are responsible for:

- ensuring they fully participate in the Cyclic Review by developing a clear understanding of its purpose, reading all documentation and conducting professional dialogue with the school community and other team members
- contributing to deliberations to inform the Cyclic Review Report and assisting as required with its preparation.

Cyclic Review Team Report

This report is written for the Director of Schools and subsequently the Principal. Following the sign off with the Director of Schools, the distribution of the Report is at the discretion of the principal.

The School Cyclic Review Report will contain the following sections:

- summary of School and Cyclic Review Team details
- school improvement context – the Cyclic Review Team’s observations on the school’s current context and particular challenges
- the School Improvement Journey – the Cyclic Review Team affirms and challenges the effectiveness of the school’s improvement processes
- Future Directions – the Cyclic Review Team reflects on the future direction of the school’s plans to ensure they are aligned to the needs of the school
- Recommendations – the Cyclic Review Team outlines any recommendations.
The layout of this document is indicative of the length required.
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Section A  School Improvement Context

Guiding Question:

A1  What are our school’s main features and challenges?

Please provide contextual information relevant to the school’s improvement plans. This should include the nature of the learners, special features of the school and other issues that may have impacted on the school’s processes for self-review and improvement and priority order for rating components. It should not repeat information contained in the School Profile.
Guiding Questions:

B1 Where are we now?
B2 How did we get here?

Outline the processes used to determine priority order and rate effectiveness. Identify strengths and improvements made to date in your SRI Cycle. In particular focus on improvements to student outcomes.
### Section C  Community Involvement/Engagement

**Guiding Question:**

**C1** In what ways have we engaged the school community with our improvement journey?

Outline the processes used to gather the views of stakeholders and to engage them in the improvement process.

### Section D  Quantitative and Qualitative data to support our school’s perceptions of improvement.

**Guiding Question:**

**D1** What strengths and areas for improvement emerged through the analysis of your data? How did this impact upon school improvement initiatives?

Please provide a summary of your data analysis
The Cyclic Review Team has been provided with the following information to assist in developing and understanding of our school:

- School Profile
- Current School Improvement Plan (including Annual Action Plans for the current cycle)
- The two most recent Annual School Reports to the Community
- School Ratings of the SRI Components (as part of SRI Plan)
- An analysis of the relevant Student Learning Data and subsequent impact on learning and teaching
- Other data and analysis that provides information on student outcomes
Section E  Future Directions

Key Questions:

E1  Where do we need to go from here?
E2  How will we get there and how will we know when we get there?

Comment on future directions for the school and how they were identified. Name any challenges that need to be overcome. What broad strategies that might be used to achieve improvement? What are some of the indicators that will identify success?
**School Review and Improvement**  
**Cyclic Review**  
**Report to the Director of Schools**

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**Principal**

**Assistant Principal**

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**Review Team School Visit Date**
Report Contents

Section A
School Improvement Context
(This is a response to Section A of the School’s Self Review Report.)

This section is intended to include the Cyclic Review Team’s observations on the school’s current context and associated challenges.

Section B
The School Review & Improvement Journey
(This is a response to Sections B, C and D of the School’s Self Review Report.)

Comment on the processes used, the extent of community engagement and the analysis of data to assess effectiveness. The Cyclic Review Team outlines its views, endorsing and/or challenging the school’s self assessment of strengths and identified improvements. In particular, the Cyclic Review Team should comment on improvements to student outcomes.
Section C
Future Directions
(This is a response to Sections D and E of the School’s Self Review Report.)

The Cyclic Review Team outlines its views, endorsing and/or challenging the school’s future directions. Also comment on how the analysis of data has informed future planning and any challenges that need to be addressed by the school to achieve its future plans.

Section D
Review Team Recommendations
The Review Team outlines any recommendations it wishes to make.
Section E
Cyclic Review Team Comments on the Review Process

*The Cyclic Review Team comments on the quality of the preparation for the Review, along with the organisation and conduct of the school visit.*

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Section F
Report Finalisation

Director’s Signature

Signed: _______________________________ Date: _____________________