



Introduction

Benchmarking is a key component of the new school planning process. It informs the critical decisions for a new Catholic school that define the catchment area, long-term enrolment forecast, potential peak enrolment, school location and site selection.

Additionally, enrolment benchmarks are used to monitor and provide support to existing schools. After the February and August census each year, all existing schools are benchmarked against standards to ensure schools meet the ongoing requirements for enrolment retention rates, student transition rates, enrolment growth or ongoing viability and Catholicity.

Purpose

To detail how Melbourne Archdiocese Catholic Schools Ltd (MACS) enrolment and school provision benchmarking is used to plan for new schools and to monitor and support existing schools.

Scope

This policy applies to:

- existing and planned provision of future MACS primary schools, secondary schools and school campuses
- MACS Staff
- the Child Safety and Risk Management Board Committee.

Principles

Benchmarking is the process of setting clear objectives and mechanisms to measure performance. Infrastructure benchmarking facilitates:

- an ongoing, systematic process to set and measure school enrolments
- a process to identify schools where enrolment is decreasing or increasing
- effective monitoring of school demand and provision
- determining future school provision.

Enrolment benchmarking also serves to highlight school performance with objective data that illustrates the impact on enrolments and identifies a need to formulate a change management plan to deliver the required improvements.

MACS infrastructure benchmarking uses both an internal comparison of enrolments within the organisation, using data sourced from MACS schools and external data sets including the ABS Census, population area analysis and population forecasting.

Policy

1. Benchmark monitoring

- 1.1. Enrolment benchmarks serve as one of several measures for monitoring existing school provision and for determining future school provision.
- 1.2. MACS undertakes enrolment benchmark monitoring to identify schools which have fallen below established critical MACS benchmarks.
- 1.3. Benchmark monitoring:
 - 1.3.1. is intended to assist in the early identification of enrolment patterns that are indicative of broader issues which may affect school viability
 - 1.3.2. is designed to assist and inform the school improvement reporting process

- 1.3.3. serves to reflect diocesan-wide trends in student movement
 - 1.3.4. is reviewed annually and adjusted when necessary, to ensure continued relevance.
 - 1.4. MACS monitors and assesses the following key benchmarks:
 - 1.4.1. Catholicity
 - 1.4.2. destination of students (primary schools only)
 - 1.4.3. participation rates
 - 1.4.4. retention rates
 - 1.4.5. transition rates
 - 1.4.6. changes to Prep/Year 7 and total enrolment.
 - 1.5. MACS also monitors a series of socioeconomic indices as set by government departments and educational agencies, as detailed in the Infrastructure Benchmarking Procedures.
- 2. Primary and secondary school benchmarks**
- 2.1. Enrolment, participation, and retention and transition benchmarks for MACS primary and secondary schools are detailed Infrastructure Benchmarking Procedures.
- 3. Existing schools benchmark monitoring**
- 3.1. Data used in enrolment benchmark monitoring is collected directly from schools as part of the bi-annual primary and secondary school census in February and August each year.
 - 3.2. In addition to student enrolments, existing school benchmarking will also monitor:
 - 3.2.1. actual participation rates of Catholic student enrolment from the total number of Catholic students in the catchment
 - 3.2.2. the capability of a school to retain students within the school
 - 3.2.3. the capability of a school to transition students from one year level to the next
 - 3.2.4. the capability of a school to transition from primary Year 6 to secondary Year 7 schools within the sector.
 - 3.3. The above outcomes are used to identify trends in a particular school or the broader system and recommend policies to improve low rates.
 - 3.4. Where a MACS school falls below two or more benchmarks:
 - 3.4.1. it will trigger a further review and engagement with the school by the General Managers (Regions)
 - 3.4.2. where deemed beneficial, schools may implement the Guidelines for Enrolment Maximisation to increase enrolments and school viability.
 - 3.5. Schools that fail to increase enrolments and improve viability may be reviewed for closure, amalgamation or relocation in accordance with the School Viability Policy.
- 4. Primary school long-term enrolment benchmarks**
- 4.1. MACS sets and uses long-term enrolment benchmarks as a key tool in planning and site acquisition for new primary schools.
 - 4.2. New parish primary schools in metropolitan areas have a long-term enrolment benchmark of 525 students, with an expected enrolment outcome between 400 and 600 students.
 - 4.3. New primary schools planned against the 525 long-term enrolment benchmark typically reach a peak enrolment benchmark of approximately 700 students, depending on the rate of residential development and population characteristics of the catchment area.
 - 4.4. Non-metropolitan new primary schools are set a long-term enrolment benchmark of 200 students or a single stream, with a peak enrolment of 270 students.
 - 4.5. Long-term enrolment benchmarks for primary schools are in the Infrastructure Benchmarking Procedures.
- 5. Secondary and Prep to Year 12 school long-term enrolment benchmarks**
- 5.1. MACS sets and uses long-term enrolment benchmarks as a key tool in planning and site acquisition for new secondary schools.

- 5.2. Co-educational Years 7–12 secondary schools in metropolitan areas have a long-term enrolment benchmark in the range of 1,200 to 1,500 students.
- 5.3. Prep to Year 12 secondary schools in metropolitan areas have a long-term enrolment benchmark in the range of 1,400 and 1,700 students.
- 5.4. Long-term enrolment benchmarks for all secondary school structures are detailed in Appendix 4 of this policy.

6. Peak enrolment benchmarks

- 6.1. MACS sets and uses peak enrolment benchmarks to monitor future school provision
- 6.2. MACS has set the following peak enrolment benchmarks:
 - 6.2.1. new primary schools planned for 525 long-term enrolments have a peak enrolment benchmark of 700 students, depending on the rate of residential development and the population characteristics of the area
 - 6.2.2. new Years 7–12 secondary schools planned for 1,200 and 1,500 long-term enrolments have a peak enrolment of 1,700 students, depending on the rate of residential development in a catchment, availability of other schooling options and the socioeconomic characteristics of the region.
- 6.3. Schools that exceed the peak enrolment benchmark will be monitored for future provision:
 - 6.3.1. primary schools are monitored on exceeding 700 enrolments
 - 6.3.2. secondary schools are monitored on exceeding 1,500 enrolments
- 6.4. MACS acknowledges the need to use caution and consider local knowledge when monitoring peak enrolments due to the high-level prediction error, particularly in the case of secondary schools due to a lack of reliable historical data. Enrolments are impacted by the different rate of residential growth potential in a developing area, changing household and family characteristics, and other relevant socioeconomic and demographic characteristics of an area.
- 6.5. Peak enrolment benchmarks are detailed in the Infrastructure Benchmarking Procedures.

7. Minimum enrolment benchmarks

- 7.1. When school enrolments decrease to levels that challenge the viability of a school, MACS will monitor enrolments and deploy a series of processes to provide support to the school, as detailed in the Infrastructure Benchmarking Procedures:
 - 7.1.1. primary schools with a decrease of 20 or more enrolments, and/or a $\geq 5\%$ decrease in enrolments/or have an enrolment of less than 150 students will trigger monitoring and a review
 - 7.1.2. secondary schools with a decrease of 20 or more enrolments, and/or a $\geq 5\%$ decrease in enrolments/or enrolments of less than 400 students will trigger monitoring and review.
- 7.2. MACS has developed the Guidelines for Enrolment Maximisation which can be used to assist schools to increase enrolments and maintain viability.

8. Catchment benchmarks

- 8.1. School catchments are appropriately sized to support the school long-term enrolment benchmark, as detailed in points 4 and 5 of this policy.
- 8.2. A school catchment for a proposed new school is defined by applying the latest population and dwelling forecast figures and using the latest Catholic statistics from the ABS Census to determine the underlying enrolment demand within a nominated area.
- 8.3. The number of households in a school catchment sufficient to maintain long-term enrolment benchmarks is directly related to the proportion of the community that is Catholic, as reported in the ABS Census data.
- 8.4. Parish primary school catchments typically:
 - 8.4.1. are located entirely within the boundaries of one parish but can on occasion span portions of two or more parishes.

- 8.4.2. enrol students within the catchment boundary (enrolments from another catchment may occur, with the approval of both principals and both School Advisory Councils)
- 8.4.3. require well-defined boundaries between the school catchments where there is more than one school in a parish.
- 8.5. Secondary school catchments:
 - 8.5.1. are not typically located entirely within the boundaries of any one parish
 - 8.5.2. are planned on the basis of schools accessing several priority parishes, which are shared by a combination of schools within a broader location
 - 8.5.3. facilitate co-educational enrolment.
- 8.6. Examples of catchment size based on long-term enrolment benchmarks are detailed in the Infrastructure Benchmarking Procedures.
- 8.7. The process by which a catchment is calculated is detailed in the School Provision Planning Policy.

Procedures

Procedures to implement this policy are documented in the Infrastructure Benchmarking Procedures.

Roles and reporting responsibilities

Role	Responsibility	Reporting requirement
Chief Planning and Infrastructure Officer	Prepare a consolidated benchmarking management report	To the Executive Director and the Child Safety and Risk Management Board Committee annually in November.
General Manager, Planning, Property and Capital Funding	Calculate benchmarking outcomes using the methodologies and benchmarks following collation of census data in February and August	
	Prepares annual benchmarking reporting	For distribution to General Managers (Regions)
	Prepare summary benchmarking report	Annually in October to Chief Planning and Infrastructure Office and MACS Planning Working Group
General Managers (Regions)	Report on schools in the school improvement review process for that year that trigger benchmarks	At next MACS Planning Working Group meeting

Definitions

Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS)

The federal government department responsible for the collection of the Australian Census of Population and Housing, which is collected every five years.

ABS Census

The collection of population and housing data collected by the ABS at five-year intervals.

Actual participation rates

The proportion of Catholic students who are enrolled in Catholic schools in a school catchment, parish, deanery or diocese. The data used in measuring participation rates is the total school-aged population who state they are attending Catholic primary and secondary schools at the time of the

ABS Census, and within this data group, the proportion of these families who state their religious denomination as Catholic in the ABS Census. The analysis reflects the degree of access Catholic students have to Catholic schools, the extent to which Catholic schools cater for the needs of students in the local area and the reputation of a school in the local Catholic community.

Catchment

A defined area from which a school enrolls students. The most recent data for Catholic sector share and future population projections for the number of school-aged children in a catchment is available on MACS Planning Profiles. Population forecast data is updated every 18 months and Catholic sector share data is updated after every ABS Census interval. Catholic sector share data is also available on School Planning and Infrastructure Data Analytics (SPIDA).

Catchment size criterion

The total number of households required to be incorporated into a school catchment to obtain a minimum number of Catholic enrolments for a school.

Catholic sector share

The proportion of the total number of students from within a defined catchment area that attend a Catholic primary or secondary school.

Enrolment maximisation

The guidelines that detail the process of maximising enrolments at schools where there is a drop in enrolments in a school catchment of strong underlying enrolment demand

Long-term enrolments or LTE

The number of student enrolments projected for a primary or secondary school at least 25 years after its opening. LTE is a measure of the sustainable school population and is calculated using a methodology which identifies a predicted value (number of enrolments) and a prediction interval (time) within which the actual enrolment is likely to fall. The predicted value is called the estimated long-term enrolment – it is this value which is used most. LTE represents the most likely size of the base school population in the future.

Retention rate

The capacity of a school to retain students both within the school, from year to year, and within the Catholic sector from primary school to secondary school at the critical Year 6 primary school transition to Year 7 secondary school.

Sector share

The proportion of the school-aged population cohort that choose a Catholic education. Sector share is used when predicting long-term enrolments, peak enrolments, catchment size and consequently school provision and site selection.

Socio-economic indices

The measure of relative advantage and/or disadvantage of particular population groups which are usually geographically based and, in some instances, underpin school funding models. There are several such measures which vary in the weightings provided to different social attributes. Socio-economic indices are further detailed in the Infrastructure Benchmarking Procedures.

Staff

The term Staff refers to all people who carry out work in any capacity for MACS or its subsidiaries, and includes directors of the MACS board, board committee members, MACS Executives, employees, volunteers, consultants, contractors and School Advisory Council members, as the context requires.

Transition rate

A school's capacity to retain its students across consecutive years within the school and from primary schools to secondary schools.

Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority (VRQA)

The regulator of schools and school boarding premises in Victoria.

Related policies and documents

Supporting documents

Infrastructure Benchmarking Procedures

Related MACS policies and documents

Enrolment Maximisation in MACS Schools Guidelines

School Viability Policy

School Provision Planning Policy

Policy information

Responsible director	Director, Finance, Infrastructure and Digital
Policy owner	Chief Planning and Infrastructure Officer
Approving authority	Executive Director
Assigned board committee	Child Safety and Risk Management Board Committee
Approval date	26 September 2024 (minor amendments)
Risk Rating	Moderate
Review by	November 2025
Publication	CEVN, gabriel

POLICY DATABASE INFORMATION

Supporting documents	See list of supporting documents and related policies above
Superseded documents	Infrastructure Benchmarking Policy – v1.0 – 2022 Infrastructure Benchmarking Policy – v2.0 – 2022 (rebranding, no change in content)