Review of Religious Education for
The Catholic Education Office
Diocese of Parramatta

Empirical Research

Kevin Watson
Marguerite Maher
Gerard O’Shea
Edward Waters

School of Education
The University of Notre Dame Australia

February 2014
# Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Table of Contents</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Executive Summary</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgements</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of Figures</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of Tables</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methodology</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methods of data collection</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Survey questionnaires</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviews</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom observations</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methods of data analysis</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methods of analysis for online, closed-ended questions</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methods of analysis for principals, RECs and clergy interviews</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methods of analysis for online, open-ended questions</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methods of analysis for classroom observations</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Results of the data analysis</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Results of the online survey, closed-ended questions</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion of results of the online survey, closed-ended questions</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thematic analysis of open-ended responses in the online questionnaire survey</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clergy</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principals</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious Education Coordinators</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Synthesis of open-ended responses for the online questionnaire survey</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusions from the open-ended responses for the online questions</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thematic analysis of principal, REC and clergy interviews</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal interviews</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious Education Coordinator interviews</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Summary of the role of the Religious Education Coordinator for both Principals and RECs as a member of the School Executive 124
Summary of the role of the Religious Education Coordinator for both Principals and RECs in liaising with the parish and parish priest 124
Summary of the role of the Religious Education Coordinator for both Principals and RECs as a faculty leader 124
Summary of the role of the Religious Education Coordinator for both Principals and RECs in the formation of staff 125
Summary of the role of the Religious Education Coordinator for both Principals and RECs in prayer, liturgy and the sacraments 125
Summary of the role of the Religious Education Coordinator for both Principals and RECs in resource management and stewardship 125
Summary for both principals and RECs of the ideal curriculum 125
Summary for both principals and RECs of the evaluation of *Sharing Our Story* 126
Summary for both principals and RECs for pedagogical approaches used to teach religious education 126
Clergy interviews 126
  Summary of clergy interviews 128
Classroom observations 128
  Synthesis of classroom observations 132
Appendices 134
Executive Summary

This volume of the review of religious education reports the empirical data analysis. It details the methods of data collection and analysis. Data were collected from a diverse range of sources. Consequently, data reduction techniques were employed to reduce data to its essence without compromising diversity of participant opinion and meaning. The literature review functioned as a foundational framework to inform the analysis.

The framework was constructed using the teaching and documents of the Catholic Church and draws on academic research published in the field of Catholic education, in particular religious education and catechesis. This included the essential characteristics of Catholic education and the mission of the Church in the context of a Catholic school. It also included the formation of personnel, the organisation of the curriculum in terms of religious knowledge and its relationship to catechesis as personal formation in Christian life and the Australian context.

Empirical data were collected using online survey questionnaires completed by school principals, Religious Education Coordinators (RECs), teachers, students in Years 5 and 6 and in Years 9 and 11, parents, alumni and parish priests. Principals, RECs and priests provided more detailed information from interviews while additional data were collected from classroom observations. Closed-ended questionnaires were analysed statistically while thematic analysis was used to analyse the open-ended survey question responses, interview data and classroom observations.

A pilot study of the eight survey questionnaires was carried out to see if the questions were functioning as anticipated. The findings from the pilot study are provided as an appendix. However, the main purpose of the pilot study was to assess the validity and reliability of the survey questions.

This report provides the results of the data analysis in detail followed by summaries and syntheses of each section of the results. However, it does not condense the results and interpret them as research findings. Research findings are presented in the following volume as they inform the recommendations. Nevertheless, to enable a full and informed interpretation of the research recommendations a detailed knowledge and understanding of the results is essential.
Acknowledgements

This work was funded by a grant from the Catholic Education Office, Diocese of Parramatta. The authors wish to acknowledge helpful contributions provided by Erin McGinty, Adra Anthoney, Candice Fox, Christopher Kitching, Michelle Hilton and Linda Bellen from The University of Notre Dame Australia in writing the report and Lucy O’Connell in editing and compiling the contents.

The Evangelisation and Religious Education staff of the Parramatta Diocese Catholic Education Office should also be acknowledged for their assistance. In particular, Mr Ian Smith, Director of Evangelisation and Religious Education and Mrs Carmen Cassar Teaching Educator – Evangelisation and Religious Education deserve special mention for their continuous support and encouragement throughout the research process. Perhaps most of all, the students, parents, alumni, teachers, RECs, principals and priests who provided the data for this study should be acknowledged because without their participation this study would not have been possible.
List of Figures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Figure 1</td>
<td>Themes identified by category for Question 1, Part 1 for RECs group 1</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 2</td>
<td>Themes identified for Question 1, Part 1 for RECs group 1</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 3</td>
<td>Religious practices amongst students in Years 5, 6, 9 and 11</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 4</td>
<td>Religious practices amongst parents, teachers and alumni</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 5</td>
<td>Experience of students in Years 5, 6, 9 and 11 of religious education in the Diocese of Parramatta</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 6</td>
<td>Experiences of the religious education curriculum amongst teachers, parents and alumni</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 7</td>
<td>Experiences of the religious education curriculum by principals, RECs and clergy</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
List of Tables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Table 1</td>
<td>Thematic analysis of Question 1, Part 1 for RECs group 1</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 2</td>
<td>Demographic characteristics of surveyed populations</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 3</td>
<td>Questions regarding the religious practices of survey respondents</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 4</td>
<td>Experience of the religious education curriculum amongst students in Years 5, 6, 9 and 11</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 5</td>
<td>Experience of the religious education curriculum of teachers, parents and alumni</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 6</td>
<td>Experiences of the religious education curriculum of RECs, priests and principals</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Introduction

A review of Religious Education in Catholic Systemic Schools in the Diocese of Parramatta was initiated by the Parramatta Catholic Education Office (CEO). This report details the process and outcomes of that review. The audience for the report is the Very Reverend Bishop Anthony Fisher, the Religious Education Steering Committee, the Parramatta Catholic Education Office, school principals, RECs, staff and communities and parish priests.

The report is presented in four volumes:

- a literature review informing the study;
- a review of the current Religious Education Curriculum;
- a report on the empirical research; and
- the overall findings and recommendations.

The literature review functions as a foundational theoretical framework. It surveys and categorises the teaching of the Catholic Church as set out in its official documents since the Second Vatican Council. It also draws on academic research published in this field. The documents of the Catholic Church concerning Catholic Education – Religious Education and Catechesis in particular – have been studied under four broad headings. The first is the essential characteristics of a Catholic school and provides a context for the delivery of Catholic education and the mission of the Church. The second is the formation of personnel which details the conduct and formation of those involved in religious education as committed to the task as sincere believers. The third is the organisation of the curriculum in terms of religious knowledge and its relationship to catechesis as personal formation in Christian life. The final area is the Australian context. Although the literature in this area is limited, this section draws on previous discussions and relates them to Australian contexts especially pastoral care.

A religious education curriculum is viewed as fulfilling a number of different functions although it is usually presented as a single curriculum document. The functions are to promote knowledge of the faith, liturgical education, moral formation, teaching to pray, education for community life and missionary initiation. The review of the Parramatta Diocese Religious Education Curriculum (Sharing Our Story) refers to these six functions as it is presented in three parts. The first part will outline the essential content
of a religious education curriculum as identified by Church documents while the second will examine *Sharing Our Story* in terms of this essential content. The third part will report a set of observations about how the curriculum is implemented in schools.

The report on the empirical research is the focus of this volume and details the study undertaken to analyse the data collected to address the terms of reference for this research. The terms of reference were to:

1. examine current K-12 classroom practice and pedagogical methods in relation to RE;
2. explore of the role and effectiveness of Religious Education Co-ordinators;
3. assess the religious literacy of students;
4. explore any link between the religious practice and the religious literacy of students;
5. provide a theological and philosophical evaluation of the content and methodology of the diocesan religious education curriculum *Sharing Our Story* against the benchmarks outlined in relevant educational and magisterial documents;
6. identify the formative needs of RE teachers; and
7. make recommendations for pertinent formation initiatives and religious education resources.

The empirical research collected data using online survey questionnaires completed by school principals, Religious Education Coordinators (RECs), teachers, students in Years 5 and 6 and in Years 9 and 11, parents, alumni and parish priests. Principals and RECs provided more detailed information by participating in group interviews while priests also volunteered to be interviewed. Additional data were also collected from classroom observations. Closed-ended questionnaires were analysed statistically while thematic analysis was used to analyse the open-ended survey question responses, interview data and classroom observations.

The fourth volume details the findings from the empirical study, literature review and the curriculum analysis. The findings were then used to inform the recommendations.
Methodology

Methods of data collection
Data were collected in three ways. The first was using a survey questionnaire. The second was by interview and the third was by making observations in classrooms.

Survey questionnaires
An important emphasis throughout the review into the religious education curriculum was that it be consultative. There were eight groups of people from which to obtain information:

- school principals;
- Religious Education Coordinators (RECs);
- teachers;
- students in Years 5 and 6;
- students in Years 9 and 11;
- parents;
- alumni; and
- parish priests.

To maximise the diversity of data obtained and to ensure that each group felt consulted it was decided to provide a platform that could collect data from anyone who wish to participate in the review. Consequently, it was decided to use an online survey questionnaire. A core set of questions was constructed to gather sociodemographic data and responses to the substantive areas covered by the study. These core questions were adjusted to suit each of the eight targeted groups of participants. It was also decided to offer priests the alternative mode of a paper questionnaire to return. The eight questionnaires (see Appendix 1 to 8) were posted on ‘Survey Monkey’ with separate web addresses for each so that each group of participants would only respond to their intended set of questions. Each potential participant was provided with an information sheet and asked to complete a consent form. All participants under the age of 18 were also asked to provide a carer consent form. Each questionnaire was anonymous.

The questionnaire was in two parts; background or sociodemographic information and questions about Religious Education using five point Likert scales. Space in the form of ruled lines was provided at the end of each set of questions for respondents to provide additional or clarifying information if they wished. The Parramatta Diocesan Catholic Education Office and the Steering Committee were provided with a draft copy of the questionnaires so they could provide feedback and make adjustments. Feedback was
provided and some of the language for younger students was modified to increase their understanding of questions.

A pilot study of the survey questionnaires was carried out across a secondary and a primary school in the Lismore Diocese. The main purpose of the pilot was to check to see if the questionnaires were functioning as anticipated as well as test the process of obtaining information using an online format. The findings from the pilot study are provided in Appendix 9 along with an assessment of the validity and reliability (function) of the survey questionnaires. As a result of the pilot further adjustments were made to the language of the questions. The language issue became important. On the one hand, it was felt the language used in the questionnaire should reflect the language used in the documents that informed the study. On the other hand, some language would have been too difficult for especially younger students to fully understand. There was a tension between not wanting to change the language derived from official documents and the age-appropriateness of that language for younger participants. The Steering Committee were informed of the changes before the final forms of the questionnaires were posted online.

Interviews

In keeping with the consultative nature of the review, it was decided to interview all principals, RECs and priests who volunteered. This was achieved by conducting group interviews at meetings conducted by the Diocese of Parramatta Religious Education Office. The group interviews for principals and RECs followed the same process as detailed below:

- Participants were divided into Primary and Secondary groups of 8-10
- There were a total of 20 groups
- Four questions (see below) comprised the interview schedule
- Facilitators were assigned the same two of the four questions for two different groups
- Each group cycled through two facilitators so that all four questions were answered by each of the ten groups
- Facilitators completed hand-written or typed notes for all groups
- Participation was anonymous with no RECs or principals identified
- Facilitators recorded individual and repeated findings ‘as majority,’ asked for clarification of key points and interacted to seek elaboration of responses
- All notes were written as summary notes to be typed for analysis
- Questions 1 and 2 were asked by University of Notre Dame staff
- Questions 3 and 4 were asked by Parramatta CEO staff
The questions asked were:

1. How do you experience the Religious Education Coordinator’s role regarding the following?
   a. Member of the School Executive
   b. Liaison with the parish and the parish priest
   c. Leader of a faculty/learning
   d. Formation of faculty and of whole staff
   e. Prayer/liturgy/sacraments
   f. Resource management/stewardship

2. If the purpose of Religious Education is to bring students into an intimate relationship with Jesus Christ, then what should the ideal curriculum look like?

3. If Religious Education involves teachers teaching and students learning about the Catholic faith, evaluate *Sharing Our Story* according to its strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and challenges?

4. Comment on the pedagogical approaches to teaching Religious Education in your school.

Interviews were conducted so that participants responded in terms of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and challenges. All responses were typed ready for analysis.

Priests who volunteered to be interviewed were interviewed in a quiet room at the CEO Parramatta Office. A different set of questions was asked of priests compared with school principals and RECs. This is because the questions for principals and RECs focused on school organisation, curriculum and pedagogy. Priests may not know a great deal about these areas. Consequently, priests were asked the following questions:

- What is your involvement with schools?
- What do you know about the Religious Education Curriculum?
- What are your views about the religious life of students and other school personnel;
- Given *carte blanche*, what form should RE take?

All responses were typed ready for analysis.

**Classroom observations**

The Diocese is divided into four regions. Two schools were purposefully selected from each region for classroom observations. The purposeful selection of schools was to ensure a representative mix of a boys’ school, a girls’ school and a coeducational school as well as a school from a low SES area and one from a
high SES area. A rural school would also be included as well as an urban school and the age range should represent the full age range of students across the diocese. It was acknowledged that most schools would meet more than one of the criteria listed above.

The purpose of the classroom observations was to monitor the implementation of the RE curriculum. Curriculum documents (programs) at each school were examined for consistency with what was centrally determined. In addition, each lesson observed was reviewed against the school RE program.

Classroom observations covered four areas. They were:

- student engagement in the lesson;
- pedagogy used in teaching;
- intellectual rigour in terms of religious content; and
- connectedness to student real life experiences.

Classroom observations were reported as a summary narrative that addressed the four areas stated above. It should be noted that although it was intended to observe a boy’s class this was not able to be achieved in the timeframe allocated. More than one class was observed for some year groups.

Methods of data analysis
There were four sets of data to be analysed. The first was the closed-ended questions that composed the eight online survey questionnaires. The second set of data was the interviews with principals, RECs and priests. The third was the open-ended questions at the end of the online surveys for school principals, RECs and priests and the fourth set of data was the classroom observations. The sequence above is the order in which the data were analysed.

Method of analysis for online, closed-ended questionnaires
The first section of each questionnaire sought demographic information (age, gender, religious affiliation, etc.) Some questions were specific to particular populations (such as years since ordination) and some were general (the same across all stakeholder groups). Differences between groups of responses were analysed using Pearson’s Chi Square test, with test statistics implying $p$-values less than 0.05 taken to indicate a significant difference between groups and/or populations, with ‘group’ defined as ‘a subset of a population (such as male) giving a particular answer.’
After analysing the demographic characteristics of the surveyed populations, analysis of responses describing religious practices and experiences of education within the Diocese was conducted. For surveyed populations except priests, principals and RECs, data on religious practices such as the frequency of Mass attendance was collected. A range of questions asked the survey respondents about their experience of education within the Diocese of Parramatta; these questions were different for different surveyed populations. However, among these different sets of questions, broadly similar groups of surveys could be distinguished. Whilst comparisons between all surveyed populations were not possible due to the heterogeneity of the surveys, comparisons across populations were possible among these similar groups of surveys. Generally, the questions asked of students in Years 5, 6, 9 and 11 were similar, so student responses formed one category for analysis of differences between groups. Parents and alumni were asked fairly similar questions, so comprised another group for which comparisons could be made. Principals, RECs and priests surveys shared much in common and formed the third group for analysis. The survey directed to teachers had attributes in common with both the surveys of parents and alumni and RECs. Therefore, comparisons between teachers’ responses were initially made with both these groups where appropriate. However, as the analysis unfolded it was found that teacher questions were effectively similar to those of parents and alumni with the outcome that they ended up being treated as essentially the same group. Similarly for the demographic data, chi square analysis was used to test for differences in responses within populations, and differences in responses to similar questions between populations. Analysis was conducted using SPSS v. 22 (2013, IBM SPSS Inc., Chicago, Illinois), primarily using the CHISQUARE procedure nested under NPAR.

Method of analysis for principal, REC and clergy interviews

Interviews were conducted with all school principals and Religious Education Coordinators across the diocese. Principals were interviewed in groups of eight to ten. They were cycled through two interviewers who asked two questions each. So, a total of four questions were asked. Although the second, third and fourth questions were single questions, the first question consisted of six parts. Each question – and, in the case of Question 1, each part of a question – was analysed separately. The same process was followed for Religious Education Coordinators who were interviewed on a different day. There were a total of ten groups interviewed for both the principals and RECs. Each interview for each group was transcribed before it was analysed.

A thematic analysis was undertaken for each question or part of a question as shown in Table 1 below. The unit of text analysis was the sentence. Each sentence was written in full. Alongside it the analyst
wrote their interpretation of what the text said followed by a categorisation of what the text was about. The final part of the analysis was the generation of a theme that captured the essence of the text.

Table 1 shows an example (an actual example) of this process. Table 1 is followed by Figure 1 which shows each of the three categories generated from the example (leadership, duties and inclusion) and the themes identified within those categories. This information was then summarised and presented in Figure 2 as the themes identified.

Table 1  Thematic analysis of Question 1, Part 1 for RECs group 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question One, Group One (RECS)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q1: How do you experience the Religious Education Coordinator’s role in regards to the following? Membership of the School Executive, Liaison with the Parish and the Parish Priest, Leader of a faculty/learning, Formation of faculty and of whole staff, Prayer/liturgy/sacraments, Resource management/stewardship.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1.1 Member of the School Executive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All agree, integral part of the leadership team, part of exec.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role includes leadership and exec.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership – responsibility.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The REC role included leadership.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role includes classroom visits, learning walks.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role includes classroom visits and learning walks.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duties – Classroom visits and learning walks.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The REC role included classroom visits and learning walks.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some have responsibility for a grade as there is a big drive on literacy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role includes a grade, literacy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duties – grades, literacy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The REC role includes grades and literacy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Their opinion is sought - they have a say, not excluded as being just RE but RE is a priority.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The REC opinion is included and is a priority.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inclusion – Opinion, priority.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The REC’s opinion is included and a priority.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most are included in the interview process and are valued, they are looking at the RE understanding of the candidates.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The REC is included in the interview process.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inclusion – Interview.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The REC is included in the interview process.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some feel their school is led from the top, there is some delegation but not a lot - the leader is the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some supervision and modelling for teachers occurs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duties – Supervision, modelling.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The REC sometimes supervises and models for teachers.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
leader. They do supervise classrooms, model for the teachers but never considered for acting positions eg. Assistant Principal etc. The title suggests they should be equal but it is not reflected in practice.

| Others feel they are equal and they are a stage leader and involved in whole school decisions-collaborative decisions. | Some RECs feel they are a stage leader. They are involved in whole school and collaborative decisions. | **Leadership** – stage **Inclusion** – whole school, collaborative decisions | The REC role includes stage leadership. The RECs are included in decisions. |

Figure 1   Themes identified by category for Question 1, Part 1 for RECs group 1

- The REC role included leadership:
  - executive
  - stage

- The REC duties included:
  - classroom visits
  - learning walks
  - grades
  - literacy
  - supervision
  - modelling

- The RECs felt included in:
  - providing opinions
  - interviews
  - decisions

Figure 2   Themes identified for Question 1, Part 1 for RECs group 1

- The RECs role included exec and stage leadership.
- The REC duties included classroom visits, learning walks, grades, literacy, supervision and modelling.
- The RECs felt included in providing opinions, interviews and decisions.
Figure 2 shows the outcome of a typical thematic analysis. This same process was followed for all thematic analyses not only for the interviews but for the analyses of the open-ended responses to the online survey questions as well.

**Method of analysis for online, open-ended questions**

Thematic analysis was used to analyse the online questionnaire survey responses from priests, school principals and Religious Education Coordinators. There were four extended answer questions asked of each of these groups. The questions were:

- What priorities have you identified regarding the formation of teachers?
- To what extent does the religious education program deliver on its goal of leading students to a full and rich appreciation of Catholic faith and tradition?
- To what degree is there collaboration between the parish and school?
- Comment on how you see the role and effectiveness of the Religious Education Coordinator?

The analysis was undertaken question by question for each of the three groups and reported as a narrative. The responses from principals, RECs and priests were then combined under each question. This was undertaken as part of the overall data reduction process so that responses were brought together for each of the four questions. If a view expressed by a particular group (such as RECs) differed from the other two groups, this was noted so as to retain differences between data sets.

**Method of analysis for classroom observations**

Classroom observations were analysed thematically using pre-determined themes. The pre-determined themes were derived from the categories of observations:

- student engagement in the lesson;
- pedagogy used in teaching;
- intellectual rigour in terms of religious content; and
- connectedness to student real life experiences.

Observations were grouped against these themes and reported as a narrative for each classroom. The observations for each classroom were then synthesised in a way that allowed the similarities and differences for each of the four themes to be retained.
Results of the data analysis
The results of each of the four analyses are presented below. The online survey closed-ended question analysis is presented first followed by the thematic analysis of the open-ended online responses from principals, RECs and priests. The thematic analysis of the principal, REC and clergy interviews is next with the narrative of the classroom observations completing the presentation of the results.

Results of the online survey, closed-ended questionnaire
The demographic characteristics of the overall population surveyed, and some demographic characteristics unique to priests, are described in Table 2. Gender differed significantly both between populations and within populations. Students in Years 5 and 6 were evenly split between genders, but respondents in most other groups were significantly more likely to be female. Only principals were more likely to be male. Respondents in all populations were significantly more likely than not to be baptised Catholic (within population difference between groups). More than 70% of respondents in each population were Catholic. The age range of respondents differed significantly both within and between populations. Alumni respondents were most likely to be under 30 years of age, whilst principals were most likely to be over 40. The overall picture of most of the surveyed population is that it was primarily female, young, and Catholic, except for certain special populations (primary school children, principals and priests). As revealed by analysis of their years since ordination, priests were likely to be relatively old. Less than a third had been ordained for less than 25 years. Priest respondents were neither significantly more likely to be either incardinated within the Diocese of Parramatta or to be members of religious orders, suggesting that the surveyed population comprised a broad mix of diocesan and religious clergy.

Table 2  Demographic characteristics of surveyed populations. Specific populations that were required to conform to particular demographic criteria were excluded from analysis so as not to bias results.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Attribute</th>
<th>Statistically significant difference between surveyed groups and/or populations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>General</td>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Y*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Baptised Catholic</td>
<td>Y**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age range</td>
<td>Y***</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Priests</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years ordained</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cleric of diocese of Parramatta</td>
<td>N</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious order member</td>
<td>N</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Excluding priests
**Excluding principals and RECs
***Excluding parents and students, who have intrinsically more constricted age ranges on average

The religious practices of survey respondents (other than priests, principals and RECs, who were not questioned about Mass attendance and prayer) are described in Table 3. Across all surveyed populations, Mass attendance was high (approximately 40% attending weekly). Similarly, in most populations, personal prayer was very common, with almost half of parents, teachers, alumni and younger children praying daily. Group prayer was less common among most groups, but a large majority of teachers prayed daily in groups (possibly with other teachers). Religious practice amongst teenagers (those in Years 9 and 11) was the lowest, with teenagers more likely to never attend Mass or pray in groups. However, even amongst this group, a substantial percentage (close to 30%) prayed alone daily. Further comments of religious practices are given in Table 3, and results are presented graphically in Figures 3 and 4.

Responses of students to questions regarding the religious education curriculum are summarised in Table 4 and Figure 5. Most students agreed or strongly agreed with all propositions advanced in the survey items. The main trend was that older students were significantly ($p<0.05$) less likely to express strong agreement with the propositions than younger students, reflecting a less positive attitude to religious concepts generally amongst teenagers. There were only two propositions with which older students were more likely to strongly agree than to agree, and the converse with students in Years 5 and 6. These propositions involved the centrality of the Trinity and Christ in the curriculum, and were worded subtly differently for students in Years 5 and 6 and Years 9 and 11.

The responses to survey items by parents, teachers and alumni displayed more diverse trends, with different trends for different survey items. Table 5 details the trends in responses for each survey item, with graphical presentations of results in Figure 6. In general, alumni were more positive in their responses than other groups, strongly rather than merely agreeing with most survey items, suggesting they had a very positive experience of the religious education curriculum. Interpretation of this finding must be
balanced by considering the unrepresentative demographics of alumni respondents (young, female, and strongly Catholic). It is an open question whether their teachers at school influenced the strength of their Catholic affiliation or whether their affiliation influenced their view of their teachers and their schooling. For example, contrasting strongly with their overwhelmingly positive responses, alumni were unsure about whether a diversity of methods was used in religious education and whether the religious curriculum was taught in an engaging and interesting way. Perhaps alumni’s strong religious convictions informed this judgement, either by them feeling that they could present religion better than their teachers, or because they felt that religion should be dogmatic rather than interesting in presentation. Anecdotally, it is known that many alumni respondents were also teachers in the diocesan education system (perhaps completing both surveys), suggesting that the former response might be more likely. How neutral responses should be interpreted is also an issue – they are not disagreement, but neither are they a positive response. Why alumni favoured neutrality rather than either an outright negative or positive response requires careful interpretation.

Survey responses from priests, principals and RECS are in Table 6 and Figure 7. A comparison of survey responses by priests, principals and RECs showed that in general, priests responded less favourably to the religious education curriculum than principals and RECs. There were no survey statements with which priests strongly agreed, and priests were neutral on whether the religious education curriculum flowed through to families and whether it emphasised the Trinity enough. Principals overwhelmingly strongly agreed with survey propositions, merely agreeing only with six items. Their overwhelmingly very positive responses must be considered as constrained by their employment. Because of their relatively small size as a group of respondents, principals may have had concerns about their anonymity which reflected in their responses, as they did not wish to compromise their positions.
Table 3
Questions regarding the religious practices of survey respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How often do you attend Mass with your family?</th>
<th>How often do you attend Mass?</th>
<th>How often do you pray by yourself?</th>
<th>How often do you pray at home with your family?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parents, Year 5 and 6 children and alumni were most likely to pray daily with others.</td>
<td>Parents, Year 5 and 6 children and alumni were most likely to pray daily with others.</td>
<td>Parents, Year 5 and 6 children and alumni were most likely to pray daily with others.</td>
<td>Parents, Year 5 and 6 children and alumni were most likely to pray daily with others.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most respondents (~80% in all populations) either attend Mass weekly or on special holy days and feasts. Respondents not in these groups are likely to never attend.</td>
<td>Most respondents (~80% in all populations) either attend Mass weekly or on special holy days and feasts. Respondents not in these groups are likely to never attend.</td>
<td>Most respondents (~80% in all populations) either attend Mass weekly or on special holy days and feasts. Respondents not in these groups are likely to never attend.</td>
<td>Most respondents (~80% in all populations) either attend Mass weekly or on special holy days and feasts. Respondents not in these groups are likely to never attend.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In contrast, students in Years 9 and 11 were much more likely to report never praying to other people (31%). Teachers were also more likely to report never praying to other people.</td>
<td>In contrast, students in Years 9 and 11 were much more likely to report never praying to other people. Teachers were also more likely to report never praying to other people.</td>
<td>In contrast, students in Years 9 and 11 were much more likely to report never praying to other people. Teachers were also more likely to report never praying to other people.</td>
<td>In contrast, students in Years 9 and 11 were much more likely to report never praying to other people. Teachers were also more likely to report never praying to other people.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Comments

Most respondents (~80% in all populations) either attend Mass weekly or on special holy days and feasts.
Figure 3: Religious practices amongst students in Years 5, 6, 9 and 11.
Figure 4: Religious practices among parents, teachers, and alumni.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey – Years 5-6</th>
<th>Survey – Years 9-11</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. My school helps me follow Jesus Christ.</td>
<td>B. My school helps me to follow Jesus Christ.</td>
<td>Students in Years 5 and 6 were most likely to strongly agree with survey proposition, whilst students in Years 9 and 11 were most likely to agree.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. My school celebrates Christian values by reading the Bible and participating in the Mass.</td>
<td>C. My school celebrates Christian values by reading the Bible and participating in the Mass.</td>
<td>Students in Years 5 and 6 were most likely to strongly agree with survey proposition, whilst students in Years 9 and 11 were most likely to agree.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. My school helps the poor.</td>
<td>D. My school helps the poor.</td>
<td>Students in Years 5 and 6 were most likely to strongly agree with the survey proposition, whilst students in Years 9 and 11 were most likely to agree.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. My school gives me opportunities to think about the needs of others.</td>
<td>B. My school helps students to look beyond themselves and consider the needs of others.</td>
<td>Students in Years 5 and 6 were most likely to strongly agree with the survey proposition, whilst students in Years 9 and 11 were most likely to agree.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. In my school teachers and students show respect and care for each other by the way they treat each other.</td>
<td>C. My school respects the religious freedom of its non-Catholic students.</td>
<td>Students in Years 5 and 6 most likely to strongly agree with the survey proposition, whilst students in Years 9 and 11 were most likely to agree.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D. My school invites parents to religious events.</td>
<td>E. My school offers parents opportunities to help with the education of their children, including religious education.</td>
<td>Students in Years 5 and 6 were most likely to strongly agree with the survey proposition, whilst students in Years 9 and 11 were most likely to agree.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. My school gives me A. My school supports the</td>
<td>Students in Years 5 and 6 were</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4  Experience of the religious education curriculum amongst students in Years 5, 6, 9 and 11
| A. In my school teachers show their commitment to their faith | A. In my school religious education teachers show commitment to their faith. | Students in Years 5 and 6 were most likely to strongly agree with the survey proposition, whilst students in Years 9 and 11 were most likely to agree. |
| B. Religious education in my school helps students to take part in the life of the Church. | B. Religious education in my school includes a comprehensive presentation of the Catholic faith. | Students in Years 5 and 6 were most likely to strongly agree with the survey proposition, whilst students in Years 9 and 11 were most likely to agree. |
| C. Religious education in my school encourages students to participate in the life of the Church. | Students in Years 5 and 6 were most likely to strongly agree with the survey proposition, whilst students in Years 9 and 11 were most likely to agree. |
| A. Teachers in my school know that the Holy Trinity is important to our faith. | A. In religious education I am taught about the Holy Trinity. | One of only two propositions to which Years 9 and 11 students were more likely to strongly agree with than younger students. Note subtly different wording in the questions. |
| B. Teachers in my school place Jesus Christ at the centre of religious education. | B. Religious education teachers place Jesus Christ at the centre of religious education lessons. | One of only two propositions to which Years 9 and 11 students were more likely to strongly agree |
with than younger students. Note subtly different wording in the questions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A. In my school, religious education is the most important subject.</th>
<th>A. In my school, religious education is seen as important and given priority.</th>
<th>Students in Years 5 and 6 were most likely to strongly agree with the survey proposition, whilst students in Years 9 and 11 were most likely to agree.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>B. My teacher talks about religious education in other subjects.</td>
<td>B. In my school, Catholic values are integrated into the overall curriculum.</td>
<td>Students in Years 5 and 6 most likely to strongly agree with survey proposition, whilst students in Years 9 and 11 were most likely to agree.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. In my school religious education is taught in an interesting way and I am involved in the lessons.</td>
<td>C. In my school religious education is taught in an engaging and interesting way.</td>
<td>Students in Years 5 and 6 were most likely to strongly agree with the survey proposition, whilst students in Years 9 and 11 were most likely to agree.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D. My teacher helps all students to understand what is taught in religious education.</td>
<td>D. In my school religious education is taught to meet my learning needs.</td>
<td>Students in Years 5 and 6 were most likely to strongly agree with the survey proposition, whilst students in Years 9 and 11 were most likely to agree.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 5  Experience of the religious education curriculum of teachers, parents and alumni

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey - Alumni</th>
<th>Survey - Parents</th>
<th>Survey - Teachers</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. The school provided a full spiritual, academic and physical education.</td>
<td>A. My child’s school provides a full spiritual education.</td>
<td>A. This school offers a holistic education.</td>
<td>Respondents in each population were most likely to agree with this proposition.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. The religious character of the school was expressed through the celebration of both word and sacrament.</td>
<td>D. The religious character of the school was expressed through the celebration of both word and sacrament.</td>
<td>B. The religious character of the school was expressed through the celebration of both word and sacrament.</td>
<td>Alumni most commonly strongly agreed with this proposition, but teachers and parents were most likely merely to agree.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. The school made practical provisions for helping the poor.</td>
<td>E. My child’s school makes practical provisions for helping the poor.</td>
<td>D. This school makes practical provisions for helping the poor and the weak.</td>
<td>Alumni most commonly strongly agreed this proposition, but teachers and parents were most likely merely to agree.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. The culture of the school contributed positively to the formation of the whole person.</td>
<td>B. The culture of my child’s school contributes positively to the formation of the whole person.</td>
<td>C. The culture of this school contributes positively to the formation of the whole person.</td>
<td>Alumni most commonly strongly agreed this proposition, but teachers and parents were most likely merely to agree.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. The school proclaimed the Gospel message effectively.</td>
<td>C. My child’s school proclaims the Gospel message effectively to staff, students and parents.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Alumni strongly agreed with this statement but parents merely agreed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. The school community contributed positively to the religious formation of students.</td>
<td>A. My child’s school helps students in their religious formation.</td>
<td>A. The school community contributed positively to the religious formation of students.</td>
<td>All groups were most likely to agree with this statement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. The school</td>
<td>B. My child’s school</td>
<td>B. This school helps</td>
<td>All groups were most</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community helped students to look beyond themselves and consider the needs of others.</td>
<td>Helps students to look beyond themselves and consider the needs of others.</td>
<td>Students to look beyond themselves and consider the needs of others.</td>
<td>Likely to agree with this statement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D. While respecting the religious freedom of non-believers and other Christians, the school unambiguously proclaimed the Gospel.</td>
<td>D. While respecting the religious freedom of non-Catholics, my child’s school unambiguously proclaims the Gospel.</td>
<td>D. While respecting the religious freedom of non-Catholics, this school unambiguously proclaims the Gospel.</td>
<td>All groups were most likely to agree with this statement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. At school, teachers were well formed in their professional duties.</td>
<td>A. In my child’s school, teachers carry out their professional duties well.</td>
<td>A. In this school, religious education teachers are well formed for their role.</td>
<td>Parents and alumni agreed with rather than strongly agreed with this statement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. At school religious education teachers were well formed for their role.</td>
<td>C. In my child’s school religious education teachers model their faith.</td>
<td>B. In this school religious education teachers give witness of their commitment to their faith.</td>
<td>Parents and alumni agreed with rather than strongly agreed with this statement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. At school religious education teachers gave witness to students of their commitment to their faith.</td>
<td>C. In my child’s school religious education teachers model their faith.</td>
<td>B. In this school religious education teachers give witness of their commitment to their faith.</td>
<td>Alumni most commonly strongly agreed this proposition, but teachers and parents were most likely merely to agree.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D. Religious education at school included a systematic, comprehensive presentation of the Catholic faith.</td>
<td>E. Religious education in my child’s school includes a systematic, comprehensive presentation of the Catholic faith.</td>
<td>E. Religious education in this school encourages students to participate in the life of the Church.</td>
<td>Alumni most commonly strongly agreed this proposition, but parents were most likely merely to agree.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E. Religious education at school encouraged students to participate in the life of the Church.</td>
<td>F. Religious education in my child’s school encourages students to participate in the life of the Church.</td>
<td>E. Religious education in this school encourages students to participate in the life of the Church.</td>
<td>All groups were most likely to agree with this statement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>the Church.</td>
<td>the Church.</td>
<td>All groups were most likely to agree with this statement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A.</td>
<td>At school I was taught that the Holy Trinity is the central mystery of the faith.</td>
<td>A. In religious education my child has been taught about the significance of the Holy Trinity.</td>
<td>A. Religious education teachers in this school understand that the Holy Trinity is the central mystery of the faith.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B.</td>
<td>Religious education teachers at school placed Jesus Christ at the centre of religious education.</td>
<td>B. Religious Education teachers in my child’s school place Jesus Christ at the centre of Religious Education.</td>
<td>B. Religious education teachers in this school place Jesus Christ at the centre of religious education.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A.</td>
<td>At school, religious education was given priority.</td>
<td>A. In my child’s school, religious education is given priority.</td>
<td>All groups were most likely to agree with this statement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B.</td>
<td>At school, Catholic values were well integrated into the overall curriculum.</td>
<td>B. In my child’s school, Catholic values are integrated into the overall curriculum.</td>
<td>All groups were most likely to agree with this statement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C.</td>
<td>At school the content of the religious education program was in accordance with the teaching of the Catholic Church.</td>
<td>C. In my child’s school the content of the religious education program is in accordance with the teaching of the Catholic Church.</td>
<td>All groups were most likely to agree with this statement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D.</td>
<td>At school religious education was taught in an engaging and interesting way.</td>
<td>D. In my child’s school religious education is taught in an engaging and interesting way.</td>
<td>In contrast to their generally strongly positive responses, alumni were neutral in regards to this proposition, neither agreeing nor disagreeing with it. In contrast,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E. At school religious education was taught so that students had a good knowledge of the content of the Catholic faith.</td>
<td>E. In my child’s school religious education is taught so that students have a good knowledge of the content of the Catholic faith.</td>
<td>E. Religious education in this school includes a systematic, comprehensive presentation of the Catholic faith.</td>
<td>All groups were most likely to agree with this statement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F. At school religious education was taught in ways that met my needs.</td>
<td>F. In my child’s school religious education is taught in ways that meet the particular needs of my child.</td>
<td>F. In this school religious education is taught in a way that is adapted to the different needs of students.</td>
<td>All groups were most likely to agree with this statement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G. At school religious education was taught using a variety of methods.</td>
<td>H. In my child’s school religious education is taught in a variety of ways.</td>
<td>H. In this school religion is taught using a variety of methods.</td>
<td>In contrast to their generally strongly positive responses, alumni were neutral in regards to this proposition, neither agreeing nor disagreeing with it. In contrast, parents and teachers strongly agreed with the proposition.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

32
Table 6  Experiences of the religious education curriculum of RECs, priests and principals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey - Principals</th>
<th>Survey - RECs</th>
<th>Survey - Priests</th>
<th>General Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. This school offers a holistic education.</td>
<td>A. This school offers a holistic education.</td>
<td>A. The school offers a holistic education.</td>
<td>Priests mostly agreed with the survey proposition, whilst principals and RECs were most likely to strongly agree.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. This school has an authentic and contemporary synthesis of faith, culture and life.</td>
<td>B. This school has an authentic and contemporary synthesis of faith, culture and life.</td>
<td>B. This school has an authentic and contemporary synthesis of faith, culture and life.</td>
<td>Priests mostly agreed with the survey proposition, whilst principals and RECs were most likely to strongly agree.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. The religious character of this school is expressed through the celebration of word and sacrament.</td>
<td>C. The religious character of this school is expressed through the celebration of word and sacrament.</td>
<td>C. The religious character of the school is expressed through the celebration of word and sacrament.</td>
<td>Priests mostly agreed with the survey proposition, whilst principals and RECs were most likely to strongly agree.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D. This school makes practical provisions for helping the poor and the weak.</td>
<td>D. This school makes practical provisions for helping the poor and the weak.</td>
<td>D. The school makes practical provisions for helping the poor and the weak.</td>
<td>Priests mostly agreed with the survey proposition, whilst principals and RECs were most likely to strongly agree.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. This school supports the spiritual needs of staff.</td>
<td>A. This school supports the spiritual needs of staff.</td>
<td>A. The school supports the spiritual needs of staff.</td>
<td>Priests mostly agreed with the survey proposition, whilst principals and RECs were most likely to strongly agree.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. This school supports the formative needs of staff.</td>
<td>B. This school supports the formative needs of staff.</td>
<td>B. The school supports the formative needs of staff.</td>
<td>Priests and RECs agreed with this statement, whilst principals strongly agreed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. The culture of this school contributes positively to the formation of the whole person.</td>
<td>C. The culture of this school contributes positively to the formation of the whole person.</td>
<td>C. The culture of this school contributes positively to the formation of the whole person.</td>
<td>Priests mostly agreed with the survey proposition, whilst principals and RECs were most likely to strongly agree.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D. This school acts as an effective centre of the New Evangelisation.</td>
<td>D. This school acts as an effective centre of the New Evangelisation.</td>
<td>D. This school acts as an effective centre of the New Evangelisation.</td>
<td>Priests and RECs agreed with this statement, whilst principals strongly agreed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The proportion of students in this school who are baptised and practising their Christian faith predominantly at</td>
<td>The proportion of students in this school who are baptised and practising their Christian faith predominantly at</td>
<td>The proportion of students in this school who are baptised and practising their Christian faith predominantly at</td>
<td>Priests rated the proportion as small, whilst RECs and principals rated it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>school is:</td>
<td>school is:</td>
<td>school is:</td>
<td>as medium.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The proportion of students in this school who are involved in the parish through and by means of the sacraments and other ministries is:</td>
<td>The proportion of students in this school who are involved in the parish through and by means of the sacraments and other ministries is:</td>
<td>The proportion of students in this school who are involved in the parish through and by means of the sacraments and other ministries is:</td>
<td>Priests rated the proportion as small, whilst RECs and principals rated it as medium.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. This school contributes positively to the religious formation of students in the school.</td>
<td>A. This school contributes positively to the religious formation of students in the school.</td>
<td>A. The school contributes positively to the religious formation of students.</td>
<td>Priests and RECs agreed with this statement, whilst principals strongly agreed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. This school helps students to look beyond themselves and consider the needs of others.</td>
<td>B. This school helps students to look beyond themselves and consider the needs of others.</td>
<td>B. This school helps students to look beyond themselves and consider the needs of others.</td>
<td>Priests and RECs agreed with this statement, whilst principals strongly agreed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. This school respects the religious freedom of its non-Catholic students.</td>
<td>C. This school respects the religious freedom of its non-Catholic students.</td>
<td>C. This school respects the religious freedom of its non-Catholic students.</td>
<td>Priests and RECs agreed with this statement, whilst principals strongly agreed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D. While respecting the religious freedom of non-Catholics, this school unambiguously proclaims the Gospel.</td>
<td>D. While respecting the religious freedom of non-Catholics, this school unambiguously proclaims the Gospel.</td>
<td>D. While respecting the religious freedom of non-Catholics, this school unambiguously proclaims the Gospel.</td>
<td>Priests mostly agreed with the survey proposition, whilst principals and RECs were most likely to strongly agree.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E. In this school, parents are given respectful consideration as the</td>
<td>E. In this school, parents are given respectful consideration as the</td>
<td>E. In the school, parents are given respectful consideration as the</td>
<td>Priests mostly agreed with the survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proposition</td>
<td>Priests</td>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>Principals and RECs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>A. In this school, teachers are well formed for their professional duties.</strong></td>
<td>Priests, teachers and principals all agreed with the survey item.</td>
<td>Priests, teachers and principals all agreed with the survey item.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>C. In this school religious education teachers give witness of their commitment to their faith.</strong></td>
<td>Priests, teachers and principals all agreed with the survey item.</td>
<td>Priests, teachers and principals all agreed with the survey item.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>D. Teachers in this school work in cooperation with the Bishop and priests of the Diocese.</strong></td>
<td>Priests and principals agreed with this survey proposition, whilst RECs strongly agreed.</td>
<td>Priests and principals agreed with this survey proposition, whilst RECs strongly agreed.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>G. This school contributes positively to the religious formation of parents and families.</strong></td>
<td>Priests were most likely to be neutral in regards to this statement, neither agreeing nor disagreeing with it. In contrast, principals and RECs were most likely to agree with the statement.</td>
<td>Priests were most likely to be neutral in regards to this statement, neither agreeing nor disagreeing with it. In contrast, principals and RECs were most likely to agree with the statement.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>A.</strong> Religious education teachers in this school understand that the Holy Trinity is the central mystery of the faith.</td>
<td><strong>B.</strong> Religious education teachers in this school place Jesus Christ at the centre of religious education.</td>
<td><strong>C.</strong> Religious education teachers in the school encourage students to participate in the life of the Church.</td>
<td>Priests were most likely to be neutral in regards to this statement, neither agreeing nor disagreeing with it. In contrast, principals and RECs were most likely to agree with the statement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>D.</strong> Religious education in this school includes a systematic, comprehensive presentation of the Catholic faith.</td>
<td><strong>E.</strong> Religious education in this school includes a systematic, comprehensive presentation of the Catholic faith.</td>
<td><strong>F.</strong> Religious education in this school encourages students to participate in the life of the Church.</td>
<td>Priests mostly agreed with the survey proposition, whilst principals and RECs were most likely to strongly agree.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. Teachers of religious education in this school understand the complementary nature of Sacred Scripture and Sacred Tradition in proclaiming Jesus Christ – the Word of God.</td>
<td>C. Teachers of religious education in this school understand the complementary nature of Sacred Scripture and Sacred Tradition in proclaiming Jesus Christ – the Word of God.</td>
<td>C. Teachers of religious education in the school understand the complementary nature of Sacred Scripture and Sacred Tradition in proclaiming Jesus Christ – the Word of God.</td>
<td>All respondents agreed rather than strongly agreed with this statement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. In this school, religious education is given priority.</td>
<td>A. In this school, religious education is given priority.</td>
<td>A. In the school, religious education is given priority.</td>
<td>Priests and RECs agreed with this statement, but principals strongly agreed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. In this school, religious education is well integrated into the overall curriculum.</td>
<td>B. In this school, religious education is well integrated into the overall curriculum.</td>
<td>B. In the school, religious education is well integrated into the overall curriculum.</td>
<td>All respondents agreed rather than strongly agreed with this statement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. In this school the content of the religious education program is in accordance with the teaching of the Catholic Church.</td>
<td>C. In this school the content of the religious education program is in accordance with the teaching of the Catholic Church.</td>
<td>C. In the school the content of the religious education program is in accordance with the teaching of the Catholic Church.</td>
<td>Priests and RECs agreed with this statement, but principals strongly agreed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D. In this school religious education is taught in an engaging and interesting way.</td>
<td>D. In this school religious education is taught in an engaging and interesting way.</td>
<td>D. In the school religious education is taught in an engaging and interesting way.</td>
<td>All respondents agreed rather than strongly agreed with this statement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E. In this school religious</td>
<td>E. In this school religious</td>
<td>E. In the school religious</td>
<td>Equal proportions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statement</td>
<td>Response</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>education is taught so that students have a good knowledge of the content of the Catholic faith.</td>
<td>F. In this school religious education is taught in a way that is adapted to the different needs of students.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>education is taught so that students have a good knowledge of the content of the Catholic faith.</td>
<td>F. In this school religious education is taught in a way that is adapted to the different needs of students.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>education is taught so that students have a good knowledge of the content of the Catholic faith.</td>
<td>F. In the school religious education is taught in a way that is adapted to the different needs of students.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All respondents agreed rather than strongly agreed with this statement.</td>
<td>G. In this school technology has a place in the religious education program without undermining the value of personal witness.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All respondents agreed rather than strongly agreed with this statement.</td>
<td>G. In this school technology has a place in the religious education program without undermining the value of personal witness.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All respondents agreed rather than strongly agreed with this statement.</td>
<td>G. In this school technology has a place in the religious education program without undermining the value of personal witness.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 5

Experience of students in Years 5, 6, 9 and 11 of Religious Education in the Diocese of Parramatta

A. My school helps the poor

B. My school celebrates Christian values by reading the Bible and participating in

C. My school celebrates Christian values by attending Masses and

D. My school helps the poor

Years 9-11

Years 5-6
Years 9-11

Years 5-6
Figure 6: Experiences of the religious education curriculum among teachers, parents, and alumni.
Parents

The school's educational programs are too focused on programs and consider the needs of others.

Teachers

My child's school helps students to look beyond themselves and consider the needs of others.

Alumni

The school community helps students to look beyond themselves and consider the needs of others.

Students

My child's school helps students to look beyond themselves and consider the needs of others.
Alumni

Parents

Teachers

Alumni
Figure 7: Experiences of the religious education curriculum by principals, RECs, and priests.
Principals

RECs

Priests

65
Discussion of results of the online survey closed-ended questions

The responses to propositions in the surveys paint an overwhelmingly positive picture of the attitude of stakeholders to the religious education curriculum in the Diocese of Parramatta. These results must however be contextualized by the narrow demographics of the participants (overwhelmingly Catholic, with the majority attending Mass at least weekly). Additionally, many stakeholders, such as principals, assented to the curriculum during their tenure or when taking up their positions, and their responses can therefore be considered constrained. The results are however a valuable validation of most of the elements of the curriculum, particularly because younger children (Years 5 and 6) responded positively to questions couched in quite advanced terms, such as regarding Sacraments, the ‘life of the Church’, the Gospel and the Trinity. This suggests that even at this young age, children are engaging with important concepts. The survey results also highlighted that teenagers (those respondents in Years 9 and 11) are most disengaged with the Church, and are likely to never go to Mass or to pray in groups. One bright spot in the religious practices of this group is that many of them continue to pray alone daily. This suggests that this group is not disengaged from the spiritual, but may simply reflect a drift from organised or communal religious practice in keeping with the individualism of our culture. The challenge for the Church is to turn their solitary practices to communal ones – avenues for addressing the importance of the parish could be included even more extensively in the religious education curriculum to address this.

The survey highlighted the aging demographic of clergy, which is perhaps another reason for the disengagement of teenagers. On the whole, the curriculum is meeting the needs of most groups well, and interacts either synergistically with their existing practice or contributes to a more active practice. The level of Mass attendance amongst survey respondents was significantly better than the national average. With students, this may reflect a large number having a language background other than English. Students from a LBOTE background may attend Mass out of a strong identification of Catholicism with their culture. This does not explain the high Mass attendance amongst some other respondents however, such as parents, and suggests that the Diocese is very successfully attracting people to Mass. The responses of parents particularly support this hypothesis, as there is no reason to assume a priori that the parents of students in Catholic schools are different to other adult Catholics in the Diocese.
Thematic analysis of open-ended responses in the online questionnaire survey

This section reports the thematic analysis of the online questionnaire survey for clergy, school principals and Religious Education Coordinators in that order. There were four extended answer questions. The analysis will be presented question by question for each of the three groups. A synthesis of each of the four questions across all three groups will then be presented followed by an overall conclusion for all four questions.

Clergy

What priorities have you identified regarding the formation of teachers?

The clergy identified four priorities for teacher formation. The first was teacher faith formation. Faith formation was in the form of personal prayer, liturgical formation, knowledge of the sacraments and the teachings of the Church all directed towards an increased personal relationship with Christ. Some priests noted that Catholic faith formation was in the context of a multi-faith school environment since students came from a variety of religious backgrounds.

The second was involvement in the local parish. Although it was recognised that teachers often live in other parishes, it was thought that there should be some involvement in the local parish. The purpose of parish involvement was to help build community as well as be seen to be a visible witness to their faith. No detail was provided about how community would be built.

The third was continued study both theologically and in leadership knowledge and skill development. In terms of theology, continued study should include the traditions of the Church, liturgy and sacraments. Some priests were very specific and said that the life and times of Jesus should also be studied. It was thought that such knowledge would promote greater connection between the life experiences of students and Jesus. Leadership study should include leadership within the school as well as how to build faith.

The fourth priority was in the application of the faith in terms of social justice. This was seen as a priority from a diversity of perspectives. Some priests thought social justice issues were an essential aspect of the Catholic faith and therefore teachers should embrace and teach religious education as it relates to social justice. Social justice should be viewed as a central focus of teacher formation. Others thought that too much emphasis was placed on social justice issues at the expense of core Catholic teachings.

To what extent does the religious education program deliver on its goal of leading students to a full and rich appreciation of Catholic faith and tradition?

This was a difficult question to analyse. Different priests placed emphasis on different parts of the question. If the question was interpreted as ‘Does the religious education program lead to students having an appreciation of the Catholic faith?’ then responses ranged from ‘It does a very good job,’ to ‘It does a
very poor job.’ However, if the emphasis was placed on the words ‘full and rich’ then responses ranged from ‘not being able to answer the question’ to ‘It does no job at all’.

The reasons stated for the curriculum ‘doing a good job’ were that, on the whole, there was knowledge and practice of core aspects of the faith such as attending Mass on special occasions and knowing about stories in the bible and what they meant. However, these positive comments were few. The reasons stated for the religious education program ‘doing a poor job’ were that there was no connection between content and the daily lives of students, teachers and parents. Some priests said there was little connection between curriculum content and social justice issues. Others said social justice issues were given too great a priority. There was greater agreement with the idea that the religious education program needed constant support and injection from the parish and the parish priest as well as from the church community more generally. It was in this context that some priests said that the basis of the curriculum, Sharing Our Story, was a poor resource because it is self-limiting. Self-limiting is interpreted as meaning the curriculum does not connect with the aspects discussed above – daily life, social justice and the parish.

Priests who placed the emphasis on the words ‘full and rich’ believed the curriculum was not doing its job because even if the curriculum was doing a good job, it did not extend to providing a ‘full and rich’ appreciation of Catholic faith and tradition. One example is that a full and rich appreciation can only be achieved when students convert what they have learnt into action or engagement. Priests felt that most students and teachers were not engaged in their faith. The curriculum was limited to ‘bookish’ or school learning without application or worldly experience. Although the teaching is good, it is its application that needs attention.

Priests who said they were unable to answer this question said so because they felt the state of the curriculum was not the issue. They felt the curriculum was less important than the connection of what was learnt (whatever that was) with life, social justice and the parish community. These elements of action of witness were missing and this was a bigger ‘hole’ in the religious education experience than the curriculum. One priest said ‘fullness and richness is not there in either teachers or students. The social and communal aspects of the faith are absent’.

**To what degree is there collaboration between the parish and school?**

There was a diversity of responses to this question. Responses indicated that collaboration was either strong or it could be better. However, one priest said that this was not the question to ask. A more fundamental question was, which should be the centre of religious education, the school or the parish. The reasons cited for strong collaboration were the regular contact between clergy and principals and staff. Some said collaboration was excellent because Reconciliation and the Eucharist were celebrated regularly.
The reasons given for thinking collaboration could be better were the need for more interaction between schools and parish and the reorientation of the relationship between schools and the parish. It was thought the main barrier to increased interaction was lack of time. This barrier could be overcome if the relationship was reoriented so that time would be made available.

**Comment on how you see the role and effectiveness of the Religious Education Coordinator**

Responses from all clergy seemed to concentrate on the role of the REC. If effectiveness was an issue it was addressed in terms modifications to the role of the REC.

Clergy thought RECs should live and practice their Catholic faith. RECs should be a visible witness to their faith within the school community. Importantly, priests thought the REC should be involved in the parish as well as the school, for example the parish sacrament program. RECs should develop and promote the liturgy program and organise regular prayer sessions as well as school and class Masses for special occasions. Overall, the role of the REC should be to organise and supervise the teaching of the Catholic faith within the school and to ensure students understand the faith and develop a relationship with the parish community.

There were a number of priests who felt the role of the REC should be expanded to include a number of other activities. These activities, for want of a better word, include working with parents as part of a broader strategy of school community faith building so that parents and the school can cooperate together to provide more commitment and parish involvement. Priests also thought that RECs and priests should work together to increase teacher faith and parish involvement even if the parish in which they taught was not their home parish. Priests felt there should be a liaison officer in the parish to facilitate the expanded role of the REC. One of the main outcomes of increased school and parish involvement should be family Masses that straddle both communities with the anticipation that both communities would become one. Priests thought the appointment of the REC should be a joint school and parish undertaking.

**Principals**

**What priorities have you identified regarding the formation of teachers?**

There were five priorities identified by principals that were important for the formation of teachers. The first was the development and maintenance of teacher faith. In fact, it was suggested that there should be a program of teacher faith improvement across the diocese and that this should include religious literacy. It was recognised that many teachers relied upon their knowledge of Catholic faith from their school years and that unless they had engaged with ‘their faith’ more recently then their understanding of faith may be less than it could be. Religious literacy was thought to be one way of promoting a ‘deepening of faith’.
The second was improving teacher knowledge to promote teacher action. Teachers needed to be encouraged to act on their faith and that one way to do this was to provide opportunities for teachers to learn more about Catholicism. It was thought that knowledge would promote commitment which would promote personal witness.

The third area of teacher formation was to increase knowledge about the curriculum upon which religious education was based. It was felt that teachers did not fully understand *Sharing Our Story*, particularly the praxis approach. It was thought that increasing teacher knowledge and understanding in this area would help teachers to become better religious education teachers.

The fourth area of teacher formation was to encourage teachers to openly practice their religion as part of the school community. It was felt that Catholic teachers across the whole school community should bear witness to their faith. This should take the form of readings in class, assemblies and special Masses. That explanations of aspects of the Mass should be explained in class and that there should be shared prayer sessions for both staff and students. It was felt that the Parish Priest could play a role in these demonstrations of faith. Staff formation could be facilitated through staff retreats and spirituality days. In short there should be an expectation that the Catholic religion should be constantly visible throughout the school in all its forms.

The fifth priority for teacher formation was refresher courses or professional learning. It was felt that each teacher should participate in a process of professional learning that was identified specifically for them so that they could grow in their faith and the Catholic tradition.

**To what extent does the religious education program deliver on its goal of leading students to a full and rich appreciation of Catholic faith and tradition?**

Principals thought the extent to which the religious education program delivered a full and rich appreciation of the Catholic faith ranged from ‘to a great extent’ to ‘needing improvement’. Many principals also clarified a predominantly positive view with qualifying statements.

Principals who thought the RE program delivered a its goals to a ‘great, or very large, extent’ did so because of the praxis approach which encouraged students to connect, reflect and act upon Scripture in the light of their own experiences. They thought the *Sharing Our Story* basis for the curriculum was good. They thought the program offered opportunities for students to explore Scripture and relate it to their own lives. However, even while still maintaining their positive perspective, principals did say there were some aspects of the RE program (*Sharing Our Story*) that were not as good as others and needed review. But, overall, principals who thought the RE program was good did so because it provided a full and rich experience of prayer, reflection and action.
Principals who thought the program delivery of its goals ‘needed improvement’ thought the program needed to focus more on the traditions of the Catholic faith. They thought the program did not stimulate students enough in both their interest and their ability to think. Again, some thought improvement was required for some aspects of the program rather than all of it.

By far the majority of principals thought the program was ‘basically good’ but cited specific areas where they thought it was not good. Many thought the program did not transfer what was learnt to parish life. They thought the program needed ‘home involvement’. They also thought it was essential to use student life experiences to make the program relevant to students themselves. Some principals commented extensively on the importance of pedagogy and that many teachers did not teach programs so they would interest students and engage them in their faith. Principals commented that the RE program needed to actively build a closer relationship between RE and parents and the parish did not do this either. Principals though the RE program needed to be a more relevant to students living in the twenty-first century. Resources needed to be contemporary and there needed to be a balance of theology and faith in action.

A perspective that came through very strongly was the idea that the RE program was directed by a syllabus and above all it was a school subject. Religious education was essentially under the control of the Board of Studies and was a subject rather than a religious experience. Principals felt that ‘religious education’ as it was envisaged and the reality of how it was manifest in the school curriculum and under the control of the school system could never deliver its ‘hoped for’ outcomes. It should not be the curriculum of the religious education program that is the priority for review but rather the spiritual lives of students. What principals highlighted was the bigger picture. The totality of the student, school, parent, parish relationships is really at the heart of what is being interpreted as a curriculum not delivering. Some principals suggested that the curriculum was being ‘problematised’ but in reality this should be reconsidered and student religious life should be considered from a ‘whole school’ perspective of which the subject religious education could be considered a part.

**To what degree is there collaboration between the parish and school?**

Principals said collaboration between the parish and the school ranged from ‘high’ through ‘could be better’ to ‘very little’. However, the overall impression was that the parish and the school were two separate identities that functioned in two separate systems rather than as complementary components of the same system with common goals.

Principals who said collaboration was high cited the parish sacramental programs as bringing the parish and schools together. The same was said for school and parish Masses and schools providing venues for parish activities and the parish providing venues for school activities. Students also received the
sacrament of Reconciliation and celebration of the Eucharist from the parish priest which was unanimously viewed as collaboration between schools and the parish.

 Principals who said collaboration could be better said that parish priests were constantly invited to school functions but they did not come. Some principals said their parish priest did not feel comfortable in the school environment. One principal said that their school drew on so many parishes that they thought a chaplaincy model may be better than trying to make contact with a number of priests. A number of principals simply said it was difficult for priests to ‘connect’ with students. Overall, principals who said collaboration could be better said it was positive but poor citing the lack of passion from priests as the main reason. They said visits were social rather than spiritual. Priests visited schools because it was expected rather than because they were there with a mission.

 Principals who said there was very little collaboration said so because there was no ‘real’ collaboration. Priest visits were tokenistic and between them and the principal or REC. There was no involvement with the rest of the school. Some principals understood this because the parish priests had too many other commitments and could not be expected to devote the time necessary to provide the spiritual support really required by schools.

 Overall, principals tended to view schools and the parish as two separate entities with things in common. Collaboration was restricted to the superficial or what was necessary to meet core expectations. There was no deep-seated and profoundly passionate relationship. Genuine partnership collaboration was not seen as part of the relationship.

**Comment on how you see effectiveness of the Religious Education Coordinator**

 Principals commented very clearly on both the role and effectiveness of the Religious Education Coordinator. They commented on the role by saying it was crucial for a variety of reasons. However, they commented on the effectiveness of the role in terms of its not being correctly structure to meet the outcomes expected or that the role was just far too large and needed rethinking.

 All principals agreed that the role of the REC was crucial. They cited the REC as a faith leader for students, as a faith leader for staff and as a leader of the community. Principals said the REC should be respectful of staff individuality while at the same time leading them to greater spirituality. Principals saw the role of the REC as a link between school and home. They saw the REC as the coordinator of liturgy and other faith experiences as well as social justice initiatives. They saw the REC as an evangelist with a deep knowledge of the Scriptures, faith and Catholic practice.

 Many principals saw the role of the REC as not correctly structured. Its fit for purpose was poor with the religious education program being the problem rather the REC. It was stated that the key religious leader
in the school should be the principal and not the REC. The REC should be the KLA coordinator with all the other duties assigned to the principal. This would include community building through evangelisation and the building of partnerships between school, family and the parish. Principals who saw the role of the REC as not being correctly structured said it lacked definition and needed new direction. A total rethink was required.

Some principals said the role was just too big. They said the role was really in two parts. The first was curriculum and its delivery and the second was faith and community development in the context of the parish. They saw the parish as the entity in which schools were nested. A Catholic school gained its identity from its Catholic parish and should not exist without it. Principals cited the need to develop a K-to-12 perspective on religious education and they did not understand why it was not there. The role of the REC, as it was developing at present, was viewed as a Head or Leader of Mission rather than just an administrative coordination role. The KLA coordinator was important but as answerable to a higher position more equivalent to the principal or deputy principal. The role should be one of a visionary not of a coordinator.

Overall, the role of the REC was viewed by principals as crucial but that it should not be restricted to the school. The role was seen as being integrated into the community. One principal suggested there should be a position above principal and that person would be responsible for the integration of the parish and the schools within the parish. This would not only relieve the pressures on the role of REC but go some way to addressing the connection and integration of schools with the parish.

**Religious Education Coordinators**

**What priorities have you identified regarding the formation of teachers?**

There were five priorities noted by the RECs. The first was the need to improve the background knowledge of teachers. Aspects noted include the Angelus, Sacred Scripture, history and development of the Church, major doctrines and teachings of the Church, Catholic tradition, theological understanding of the liturgical Gospel, the Trinity, the sacraments, Church documents such as the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, and doctrinal content in RE lessons.

Second, they noted the priority of meeting diverse teacher needs. They noted that staff have varying degrees and kinds of spirituality, and that their formation programs operate within this diversity. They mention that some teachers have not had the opportunity for formative experiences that others have had and tailoring formation experiences to suit all teachers is a challenge.

Third, they prioritised the development of teachers’ own personal knowledge and to connect this with children’s real world experiences, to help children visualise and understand the Biblical context of
scriptural stories. Teachers need assistance with understanding the Gospel reading from Scripture and making explicit the implications for daily living.

Fourth, RECs noted the need to encourage greater participation in prayer, for them to provide regular opportunities for prayer and reflection for staff, for them to become confident in various forms of prayer for themselves and for children.

Fifth, they prioritised the development of teachers’ own faith. They highlight the need to ensure all staff had been provided with the opportunity to explore their own faith – their own personal prayer and reflection.

To what extent does the religious education program deliver on its goal of leading students to a full and rich appreciation of Catholic faith and tradition.

There was a range of responses to this question. Some RECs felt that there was little achievement of the goal of RE because of a tendency to oversimplify in the area of religious education. RECs said that many aspects of the faith are absent from the units of work because the program assumes a basic knowledge, acquired by churchgoing, on the students’ part. However, as many students are not from practising Catholic families, the lessons in the classroom are taught in isolation. RECs also noted that there is much resistance to religious education by many students because they are not Catholic, or are not practising Catholics, and too many are therefore passive.

Some RECs were hesitant about evaluating the extent to which the goal is delivered. They felt that content was provided and that the RE program certainly aimed to lead students to full and rich appreciation of the Catholic faith and tradition, but it is difficult to ascertain the depth of that appreciation. They noted that while the teaching invites students to reflect and relate the content back to their own life experiences and understanding, it is not possible to ensure that this happens.

Other RECs felt that the RE program was effective in attaining its goal to some degree. They note that although it is always possible to do more, the RE program does enhance student understanding of the Catholic tradition particularly in regard to the prayer lives of the students, as well as their participation in sacramental life of the Church. They note that much good work is done in the classrooms, that teachers are faithful to what is provided and make clear links to the Catholic faith and that praxis gives students a depth of understanding and appreciation. They noted, however, that teaching is not always matched to student needs, that it is not always well received by students, and there is a need to address student response.

Furthermore, some RECs explain that it is possible to increase student knowledge through teaching – their head knowledge. What is not clear is whether this translates for students into ‘heart knowledge.’
Children are given a lot of opportunity to learn the tradition and about faith, but there is not enough opportunity for children to reflect and explore their own sense of spirituality. Other RECs felt that while this is important, the primary responsibility for developing the faith of students is the parents supported by the parish – not the school.

Still other RECs felt that the RE program delivers extremely well on its goal of leading students to a full and rich appreciation of Catholic faith and tradition. They note that many doors of insight are opened to students in RE classes and that, while it would be different for every child, very few would go a year without a moving ‘ah-ha’ moment. They did highlight that making such a judgement depends very much on the criteria by which one is required to assess the indicator of a ‘full and rich appreciation of Catholic faith and tradition.’ They note that the majority of students do graduate from the school with a strong sense of what is at the heart of Jesus’ proclamation of the Kingdom of God and with a strong sense of what it means to be in relationship with God and Jesus. They comprehend the Church’s missionary vocation and respect the work of the saints to bring Christ’s love and faith. Students have been systematically introduced to the Scriptures, to the doctrines and the faith and the sacramental life of the Church.

**To what degree is there collaboration between parish and school?**

There were a few RECs who felt there was little collaboration between parish and school, a vast majority whose experience was that the collaboration was excellent. In the middle were a minority who described the collaboration as ‘fair.’ Again the assessment was influenced by expectation. One REC felt the school had good collaboration with the parish because the priest is “…always welcome in the school and on occasions wanders in and joins staff for morning tea.” Another, who noted links through their sacramental program, priest classroom visits and year Masses, would like to see further and enhanced collaboration.

Those who felt there was little collaboration between parish and school noted the following reasons. At one school, many families attend Maronite church in a nearby suburb. Not being on the same site as the parish made collaboration difficult and the school only visits the church for beginning of the year Mass and end of year Mass. At secondary level, they have more than one parish – up to five parishes spread out over more than 50 km. They also noted poor rapport with the incumbent parish priest as a reason for minimal collaboration.

Some on a separate site from the parish note that while it does have the potential to isolate the school from the parish at times, yet they still have a positive relationship, with the school directly involved in Sunday Masses on occasions during the year, and a partnership in running a program for children experiencing grief and loss. Some see the positives in their collaboration but would like more.
There were numerous examples of excellent and exemplary collaboration between parish and school where there is integration on all levels, and where there is a very strong community link – not just with the priest. These include such aspects as sharing the same grounds and hall at varied times, especially during the delivery of the sacramental program and where the REC is part of the sacramental team. The priest is involved in the delivery of certain aspects of some RE teaching units. This sees students enjoy a developing relationship which is enhanced by student participation in the sacrament of Reconciliation.

There are timetabled regular opportunities for RE enrichment through Reconciliation, grade Masses, weekend Masses and school Masses. There are regular visits by the parish priest to organise, deliver and celebrate the sacraments. At times the REC at one school works together with RECs at two other schools as a team with the priest to prepare the children for the sacraments. Strong collaboration sees both parish and school supporting each other and always looking for way in which to involve and nurture both the children’s and teachers’ faith development. There are examples of RECs attending parish meetings, and working hand in hand with parish priest in faith formation of staff.

Comment on how you see the role and effectiveness of the Religious Education Coordinator

RECs provided a comprehensive overview of the varied, complex nature of the REC role. They included: spiritual formation of students and staff, liturgy coordination, subject coordination, and school leadership.

In relation to spiritual formation, RECs noted how crucial the REC role is, particularly as fewer families and staff possess the faith, understanding and depth of religious literacy we would like to see in our schools. They note it is the REC’s role to ensure that the school’s religious focus is not lost amongst other curriculum areas. Additionally, the REC ensures the school seeks new ways to evangelise the faith to students, teachers and school families. They need to bring the Gospel alive in the classroom so that they inspire teachers, as they believe it should be the work of the whole staff to help with the liturgical life of the school.

Within the overarching dimension of subject coordination, RECs noted the importance of supporting individual teachers – including new teachers to the school and beginning teachers – writing and creating texts that promote the Catholic faith and tradition with the school and enhancing the teaching of RE throughout the school. They foster rich, collaborative conversations around programming. They model lessons using strategies teachers may be reluctant to trial, to enhance innovation in teaching. Additionally, they are instrumental in helping to cultivate a school climate that reflects Gospel values that permeate all curriculum areas and encompass all aspects of school life.

They note a clear overlap with spiritual formation, but in relation to liturgy coordination specifically, they liaise with the parish priest, organise Masses and ensure prayer times are available. They promote respectful and harmonious relationships and a rich prayer life which includes school liturgies, Eucharistic liturgies, celebrations of sacraments and student and staff prayer.
As a senior leader in the school, RECs mentor the principal, ensuring that staff and students are fully supported in their faith development. Their liaison with the parish determines the extent of collaboration, so is pivotal to the overall endeavour of the school to be true to its Catholicity.

When evaluating the effectiveness of the REC role, they mention the rewarding nature of the role, the privilege that it is to hold such an important position in the school and the related responsibility that goes with it. RECs note that it works well when the role is truly held in high regard by the principal, because it then provides the status then enables them to work most effectively with staff, and through them, the students. They found it so encouraging to see the power of the Holy Spirit evident in the progress occurring in their community.

Other RECs were less positive and felt that RE had become a poor third to numeracy and literacy and was often added onto the agenda as an afterthought. Many RECs felt burdened by the scope and complexity of the role and said that, in truth, it was impossible to do it all. They did not believe that the REC position can deliver what is needed to ensure that their schools become powerhouses of the New Evangelisation. They mentioned feeling overburdened, overstretched and that they are required to ‘wear too many hats’ with too little time to fulfil the role effectively.

**Synthesis of open-ended responses for the online questionnaire survey, question by question**

**What priorities have you identified regarding the formation of teachers?**

There was surprising agreement across clergy, principal and RECs about the priorities identified for the formation of teachers. All three identified faith formation as a priority leading to a personal relationship with Christ. It was suggested that professional education programs be implemented to maintain and further develop teacher Catholic faith and religious literacy to promote the practice of a deeper and more mature faith. It was recognised that such programs should recognise and accommodate diverse teacher backgrounds.

A priority of clergy was teacher involvement in the local parish to build community. This was irrespective of the parish in which the teacher lived. This priority was not mentioned by principals and RECs. Continued study in theology and leadership was cited as a priority by clergy, principals and RECs. However, principals and RECs emphasised continued learning about the religious education curriculum and the praxis approach to *Sharing Our Story*. They said such an approach was not well understood by teachers and cited lack of knowledge about the Catholic faith as one reason why teachers were less active in their practice of the Catholic faith.
Priests prioritised the application of the Catholic faith to social justice issues. However, the issue that concerned priests was the emphasis place on social justice issues. Social justice issues should be viewed as applied Catholicism rather as a priority over core Catholic teachings. Principals and RECs indicated that social justice issues were one way for teachers to demonstrate the practice of their faith and such issues could be used as examples in class readings, special Masses and in shared prayers.

A priority stated by RECs was for teachers to learn how to help students make personal connections with the real world so they can relate biblical teachings to their daily lives.

**To what extent does the religious education program deliver on its goal of leading students to a full and rich appreciation of Catholic faith and tradition?**

Responses by all three groups were very diverse. All three groups said the religious education program ranged from doing ‘a good job’ in delivering a full and rich appreciation of Catholic faith and tradition to doing ‘a poor job.’ Priests said the religious education program did a good job because it provided students with knowledge and practice of the core faith while principals said students were able to connect; reflect and act on the Scriptures based on their own experiences. This can be attributed to the praxis nature of *Sharing Our Story* and its delivery. RECs agreed with all these perspectives. In fact, some RECs said the religious education program delivered extremely well on all its aspects.

In contrast, other priests, principals and RECs said the religious education program did a poor job. They said the content taught did not connect with the daily lives of students. Priests in particular said the religious education program needed to promote a greater connection with the parish. Consequently, they said *Sharing Our Story* was self-limiting because it did not promote this connection. It was too bookish and not practical. It promoted an unreal, non-realistic view of Catholic faith and tradition. Some priests said the real reason the religious education program was not delivering was because its connection with life, social justice and the parish was not delivered effectively. The social or communal aspect of the faith was missing. This view was affirmed by principals and RECs who said the program did not promote critical thinking and personal interactions. The traditions of the faith were presented in abstraction from the actual community in which they should live. This included the home. An effective religious education program should build a relationship between students, parents and the parish. The current program was restricted and self-limiting because it is a school subject controlled by the Board of Studies. It is not a religious ‘experience’. RECs described this as the program neglecting the basics by assuming students already know them. Hence, the program was described as ‘lacking glue’ with students restricted in their opportunity to explore their own spirituality. RECs considered parents and the parish as essential components of such a spiritual process and experience.
To what degree is there collaboration between parish and school?

Responses to this question were also very diverse across all three groups. Although the language was different, responses ranged from strong to poor with diplomatic responses using terms like ‘could be better.’ All three groups cited regular contact between priests and the school as well as Reconciliation, school Masses and celebrating the Eucharist as reasons for the view that collaborations were strong. Principals and RECs also cited the use of school grounds by the parish and sharing common grounds as additional reasons for strong collaboration.

Priests did not criticise the collaboration between the school and parish other than to say collaboration could be stronger. Instead they asked a more fundamental question: which should be the centre of religious education, the school or the parish. Some principal responses were consistent with this view. They saw school religious education and the parish as two separate systems. They did not see one complementing the other as so suggested there was no genuine partnership.

Principals and RECs said there were a number of reasons why the collaboration between schools and parish could be better. The most substantive were that priests found it difficult to connect with students and that, in the main, the relationship was more social than spiritual. Some principals thought collaboration was expected rather than part of the parish mission and that although there was more significant contact between priests and principals and RECs, the relationship between priests and the rest of the school was tokenistic. Priests did not attend many school functions and even the parish sacramental program would benefit from greater collaboration. In other words, collaboration was positive but poor.

Comment on how you see the role and effectiveness of the Religious Education Coordinator.

The majority of responses across the three groups were in terms of role rather than effectiveness. Priests said the REC should not only practise the Catholic faith but should live the faith in all its aspects and be active in the parish. The REC should organise, supervise and teach the Catholic faith across all areas of the school as well as the parish.

Principals and RECs considered the role of REC to be crucial. However, principals thought the role should be rethought simply because it had become too large to manage effectively. Principals said the main roles of the REC were as faith leader, link between school and home, social justice and evangelist and all required the REC to have a deep knowledge of the faith in all its aspects. RECs saw the role across three main areas: spiritual, curriculum and as a leader in both the school and parish. They also thought the role had become too large to manage effectively.

The idea that the role of the REC had become too large to manage effectively was not new. Evidence of this was that both principals and RECs had thought about structural changes and were able to articulate
them. It was thought that the principal, rather than the REC, should be the primary religious leader in the school. The primary role of the REC should be as a KLA coordinator and concentrate on writing curriculum documents, developing teaching innovations, modelling motivating and engaging teaching strategies and developing interesting contemporary resources. Some RECs thought their role had expanded to the point where it was not able to be undertaken with any degree of effectiveness. RECs were wearing too many hats and were not good at any of them, especially the new ‘hat’ of evangelisation.

Priests also proposed a different structure, but for a different reason. Some priests thought there should be a closer and true partnership between the parish and schools. They thought there should be a person based in the parish to liaise with schools. They thought the school REC should be jointly appointed by the school and parish and that the duties of the REC should be expanded to include working with parents and the parish community. In essence, the view of these priests was to bring the communities of the school and parish together as one.

This view of a single community was consistent with the view of some principals who suggested schools should not seen as autonomous but as nested within a parish and operating as part of the parish.

Conclusions from the open-ended responses for the online questionnaire

There was generally greater diversity of views expressed within each respondent group rather than across the three groups. Overall, there seemed to be greater dissatisfaction than satisfaction with school religious education as it currently exists. It was stated in a number of different contexts that the main purpose of religious education was to not just teach the Catholic faith but to deepen knowledge of and promote understandings and actions associated with it. Different strategies were discussed to achieve this. They included greater involvement of schools in the parish community and students making personal connections between the curriculum and their everyday life experiences. It was thought that students should be provided with religious contexts that promoted personal interactions, critical thinking and the opportunity to experience communal and spiritual dimensions to their religious learning. Consequently, religious education should be viewed not only as a school subject but as a spiritual experience that enhanced the ability of individual members of the school community to connect with the diversity of their life experiences.

In its present form the subject of religious education as it is taught and administered in schools has little chance of achieving this. This was recognised by the majority of clergy, school principals and RECs. In response to this realisation the roles of the REC and the curriculum were scrutinised. The curriculum was viewed as a means of promoting the Catholic faith. If this purpose could not be achieved in its current form then it should be changed. How the curriculum should be changed was not discussed by respondents. The role of the REC should be reassessed so that it is manageable and not stretched until it becomes compromised.
Various suggestions were offered about the restructure of the role of the REC. One idea driving the suggested restructures was to bring the parish and schools together as one integrated system with schools nested in a parish context. Another idea was to have the principal as the religious leader of the school and responsible for liaising with parents and the parish community. This would reduce the workload on the REC and at the same time give priority to the spiritual dimension of the school community. Variations of this idea included the parish appointment of a school liaison. Nevertheless, the overriding emphasis was on schools being viewed as part of the parish with religious education as an important component jointly recognised by the parish and school.

Thematic analysis of principal, REC and clergy interviews
Principal, REC and clergy interviews were analysed separately. The results of the analysis of principal interviews are presented first followed by those for RECs. Each set of results is summarised at the end of each presentation with conclusions drawn at the end of the analysis of both sets of results. The clergy interview results are presented with a summary at the end.

Principal interviews
All the themes identified across all 10 groups of principals interviewed are listed below under each question or part of a question. These themes were then summarised as part of the data reduction process. Similar themes were put together and if a theme appeared more than once it was only listed once. In this way all themes identified across the principals could be summarised as a description. So, effectively there are nine summaries from the interviews with principals. Six are for the different parts of Question 1 and the other three are for questions 2, 3 and 4.

*Question 1:* How do you experience the Religious Education Coordinator’s role in regards to the following? *Member of the School Executive,* liaison with the parish and the parish priest, leader of a faculty/learning, formation of faculty and of whole staff, prayer/liturgy/sacraments, resource management/stewardship.

1.1 *Member of the School Executive*
Themes identified for all ten groups for Question 1, Part 1

- Principals felt the REC role was strengthened by Masters-qualified teachers,
- Principals see RECs as critical to leadership, do not see or choose not to see development possibilities in the role,
- Principals feel the REC role would be improved by increased focus, more faith development and less event management, increased involvement of other staff, better staff development and mentoring, increased focus on Scripture, RECs as experts and faithful leaders of their role, honouring meeting times.
• Principals felt that staffing the REC role would be improved by finding and encouraging better applications for role, decreasing turnover rate, encouraging young and uncertain teachers, dismantling assumptions about the role, improving time constraints.

• Principals see the REC role as integral to leadership, made from the system rather than the school, more complex than coordinator role, requiring of depth as a teacher, governed by the personality and credibility of the teacher.

• Principals felt the REC role was weakened by constraints on field of action, difficulty supplying good candidates.

• Principals felt successful RECs needed integrity, credibility, leadership potential, spiritual sincerity, depth, awareness of responsibilities.

• The REC role was seen as a legitimate pathway to promotion; however, some felt the label should be changed.

• RECs were considered valued members of the executive.

• The REC role included classroom support, programs, scope and sequence. At one school it was equivalent to AP.

• REC duties include being the public face of the school, leadership and encouraging faithfulness.

• The skills included in the REC role are widely various, timely, and credible, especially in terms of leadership.

• The REC role is increasing and changing, and is an unusual path to promotion.

• Principals see REC role as an alternative pathway to promotion.

• Principals felt the REC role was weakened by lack of leadership experience, lack of training and Masters qualifications, or in effect of Masters degree once obtained, lack of feedback to REC, lack of connection between principal and REC, lack of peer mentoring, lack of selection criteria, lack of classroom teacher skills, lack of vision and passion in REC, poaching of RECs for other schools from classrooms.

• Principals felt that in terms of leadership, RECs lacked skills and capacity, needed perspective on whole school, needed broad competence.

• Principals felt the REC leadership role was broad and complex, perhaps too big.

• Principals found difficulty finding appropriate candidates for REC role.

• Principals speculate whether the REC role is too big for one person. One school effectively staffs the role with two.

• Principals feel REC’s role in the staff leadership team is integral.

• Principals did not feel REC was seen as a good pathway to promotion.

• Principals found the REC role: office, not school based; critical to a school Catholic identity; sometimes forcing RECs into a role they are not ready for; sometimes not substantive in leadership; sometimes overwhelming to REC.
Summary of themes identified across all groups for Question 1, Part 1

- Principals felt the quality of applicants for the REC role was lower than for other leadership positions in the school.
- Principals felt that a better quality of applicant would see greater involvement of all staff, better staff development and mentoring, increased focus on Scripture, RECs as experts and faithful leaders of their role.
- While principals acknowledged the REC role as broad and complex, perhaps too big, and as more complex than a coordinator role, they did not see development opportunities within the role.
- Principals saw the REC role as integral to the leadership within the school.
- Principals felt the quality of RECs was enhanced if they undertook Masters-level study, and also received structured feedback from the principal.
- A majority of principals did not see the REC role as a good pathway to promotion; however, some saw it as an equally viable pathway to promotion.
- Principals found recruiting RECs difficult due to remuneration, the role, career path perceptions, a sense of failure, big work load, lack of support.

Principal responses to Question 1, Part 1

Principals have perceived the role of RECs as members of the school executive in two distinct ways. Most principals believe the role is an ineffective pathway to promotion. While recognising the role of an REC is broad and complex, possibly more so than a coordinator role, the majority of principals did not see development opportunities within the position. Conversely, other principals saw the role as an equally viable pathway to promotion. Recruitment of RECs was found problematic by principals due to issues surrounding remuneration, the requirements of the position, career pathway perceptions, extensive work load and lack of support.

The quality of applicants for the REC roles was particularly relevant as many principals felt it was lower than that for other leadership roles within the school. Better-quality applicants were felt by the principals to be better suited for encouraging greater involvement from staff and improving staff development and mentoring through an increased focus on Scripture. Principals felt the quality of RECs would be enhanced if they undertook Masters-level studies and received structured feedback from the principal. RECs are considered experts and faithful leaders, and thus their role is seen by principals as integral to the leadership within the school.
**Question 1**: How do you experience the Religious Education Coordinator’s role in regards to the following? Member of the School Executive, *liaison with the parish and the parish Priest*, leader of a faculty/learning, formation of faculty and of whole staff, prayer/liturgy/sacraments, resource management/stewardship.

1.2 Liaison Parish/Priest

Themes identified for all ten groups for Question 1, Part 2

- Principals felt the REC role would be improved by increased circulation of REC through classrooms, clear goals, commitment, consistency, shared role, increased engagement with teacher faith journey and teacher engagement.
- Principals felt the REC/Priest relationship depends on personalities of both, reasonability of expectations, demands of the parish and the priest, awareness of priest of politics of school, time constraints on REC.
- Principals noted that they are represented *ex officio* on parish council, while RECs are not.
- The responsibility of the REC is to keep up-to-date with the priest.
- In multicultural schools, the REC must be aware of diversity of faith.
- The REC role is affected by the dynamics of the parish.
- The parish priest often relies on the REC for sacraments and as an assistant.
- Principals felt the REC/priest relationship depended on personalities, time constraints, relationship building skills of the REC, responsibilities and workload constraints.
- Principals found recruiting RECs difficult due to remuneration, the role, career path perceptions, a sense of failure, heavy workload, lack of support.
- Principals found the REC/priest relationship constrained by number of parishes, unrealistic in expectations, overburdened in workload, defined by the priest’s personality, difficult to coordinate, and contextual.

Summary of themes identified across all groups for Question 1, Part 2

- Principals felt that no general principle is possible in this regard as it is entirely dependent on the characters and personalities of both priest and REC.
- Principals noted that the responsibility seemed to rest with the REC to keep up-to-date with the priest, and that the priest often relies on the REC for sacrament and as an assistant.
- Principals felt that where it did not work well was where REC/priest relationship was constrained by unrealistic expectations and difficulty in coordination.
- Principals said both REC and priest are overburdened in workload, and the relationship is defined by the priest’s personality.

Principal responses to Question 1, Part 2.
According to principals, the role of the REC as a liaison with the parish and the parish priest is entirely dependent upon the character and personality of the REC and the priest. Most principals noted that the responsibility appeared to rest with the REC to keep up-to-date with the priest, and the priest regularly relies on the REC for sacrament and as an assistant. Both RECs and priests are perceived to be overburdened in workload, and the relationship between them is not seen to work well where they are constrained by unrealistic expectations and difficulties in coordination. There does not appear to be a general principle as most principals found that the REC’s and priest’s personalities and characters determined the relationship.
**Question 1:** How do you experience the Religious Education Coordinator’s role in regards to the following? Member of the School Executive, liaison with the parish and the parish priest, Leader of a faculty/learning, formation of faculty and of whole staff, prayer/liturgy/sacraments, resource management/stewardship.

**1.3 Leader of a faculty**
Themes identified for all ten groups for Question 1, Part 3

- Principals felt RECs role would be strengthened by increased young teacher training, empowerment of teachers to proclaim the Gospel, increased teacher engagement.
- Principals felt that successful RECs needed to be credible, not overly specialist, willing to broaden and develop their potential, and equally funded.
- The REC role includes leadership, modelling, mentoring, teacher consults.
- RECs feel restricted by their role description.
- The REC role involves being a good learning leader, spirituality, and being a witness to faith.
- Principals felt REC leadership was weakened by lack of preparation, lack of vision and initiative, last minuteness, lack of effort.
- Principals felt that the REC role required broad competence.
- Principals felt RECs find difficulty in different aspects of leadership, and needed development.
- Principals found the formation of staff responsibility of the REC weakened by breadth of role, lack of shared responsibility, fraught role.
- Principals found REC role in the leadership team critical, accountable for HSC, helped by a good relationship with AP.

Summary of themes identified across all groups for Question 1, Part 3

- Principals felt the REC role was fraught, weakened by the breadth of the role and lack of shared responsibility.
- Principal noted that where there was a good relationship with the AP, the REC role was considered critical in the leadership team.
- Principals felt that successful RECs need to be credible, model for staff and mentor them, ensure good HSC outcomes – as well as being a good spiritual leader and witnesses to the faith. This can be compromised by lack of preparation and poor quality applicants.

**Principal responses to Question 1, Part 3**
The role of RECs as leaders of a faculty was felt by principals to be weakened by the breadth of the role and the lack of shared responsibility. RECs were considered successful if they were good spiritual leaders and witnesses to the faith, in addition to being credible role models for other staff in providing mentoring for them and ensuring good HSC outcomes from students. Principals noted that where there was a good
relationship between the REC and the AP, the REC role was considered critical in the leadership team. Lack of preparation and poor quality applicants were cited as ways in which the REC role is compromised.
Question 1: How do you experience the Religious Education Coordinator’s role in regards to the following? Member of the School Executive, liaison with the parish and the parish priest, leader of a faculty/learning, formation of faculty and of whole staff, prayer/liturgy/sacraments, resource management/stewardship.

1.4 Formation of Faculty and Whole Staff
Themes identified for all ten groups for Question 1, Part 4

- Principals felt the REC role would be improved by increased circulation of REC through classrooms, clear goals, commitment, consistency, shared role, increased engagement with teacher faith journey and teacher engagement.
- Principals felt a lack of direction in formation and thought it would be a good idea to develop a program with the CEO.
- Principals felt the SOS deepened staff knowledge only briefly.
- Principals felt that professional development was their biggest challenge in RE.
- The REC requires a number of personal qualities, including religious richness, authenticity, pride, understanding, openness.
- The REC duties include spiritual formation, pastoral care, community formation, assembly, newsletter, modelling and visibility.
- RECs build the role, especially in smaller schools.
- Principals felt REC role was weakened by lack of liaison with staff, lack of involvement of staff in REC duties, lack of mentorship of teachers by REC, time constraints.
- Principals found formation of staff a primary responsibility of the REC.
- Principals found learning and formation vital to REC’s effective leadership, particularly new RECs.

Summary of themes identified across all groups for Question 1, Part 4

- Principals found that learning and formation were vital to REC’s effective leadership, particularly those new to the role.
- Principals felt there was currently a lack of direction in formation, and they believed professional development was their biggest challenge in RE.
- Principals noted the role being weakened by lack of mentorship of teachers by the REC, caused by time constraints.
- The REC duties require a number of personal qualities including religious richness, authenticity, pride, understanding, openness in order to be successful in the complexity of the role which includes spiritual formation, pastoral care, community formation, assembly, modelling and visibility.
Principal responses to Question 1, Part 4

The role of RECs in relation to the formation of faculty and whole staff was found to depend on effective leadership. Principals acknowledged learning and formation as being vital for effective leadership, and this was particularly important to those who were new to the REC role. Professional development was cited as the biggest challenge in RE, and possibly related to the current lack of direction in formation of RE. Principals identified time constraints as being the reason for the lack of mentorship of teachers by RECs, which has ultimately weakened the REC role within the faculty. The personal qualities required of RECs include religious richness, authenticity and pride, while navigating the role’s complexity requires pastoral care, community formation, assembly, modelling and visibility.
**Question 1:** How do you experience the Religious Education Coordinator’s role in regards to the following? Member of the School Executive, liaison with the parish and the parish priest, leader of a faculty/learning, formation of faculty and of whole staff, prayer/liturgy/sacraments, resource management/stewardship.

**1.5 Prayer/liturgy/sacraments**

Themes identified for all ten groups for Question 1, Part 5

- Principals felt the REC role involved development of the calendar.
- Principals felt RECs needed to lead staff in prayer, liturgy and sacraments and build their capacity to work.
- RECs are expected to possess a number of qualities, including knowledge and commitment to child-centrism.
- RECs are required to perform a range of duties, including modelling, mentoring, staff development, working with catechists, providing resources, sacramental education, communication with families, promotion of Catholic schools.
- RECs meet with staff over prayer, liturgy and sacraments, or perform them themselves.
- Principals found that RECs sometimes do not embrace prayer, even though this is key in their role.
- Principals found the REC role relating to the priest to support school program.
- Principals found formation of staff vital and effective.
- Principals found prayer, sacrament and liturgy responsibilities of RECs publicly-judged, a balancing act, and in need of student-centricity.

Summary of themes identified across all groups for Question 1, Part 5

- Principals felt RECs are required to perform a range of duties, including modelling, mentoring, staff development, working with catechists, providing resources, sacramental education, communication with families, promotion of Catholic schools.
- Principals found prayer, sacrament and liturgical responsibilities of RECs publicly-judged, a balancing act, and in need of student-centricity.
- Principals found formation of staff vital and effective and that RECs meet with staff over prayer, liturgy and sacraments, or perform them themselves.

Principal responses to Question 1, Part 5

The role of RECs with regards to prayer, liturgy and sacraments involves a wide range of duties. Principals felt RECs are required to be a model for other staff, whilst mentoring, providing staff development, resources and sacramental education, as well as being responsible for communicating with families and promoting Catholic schools. The prayer, sacrament and liturgy responsibilities of RECs
were found by principals to be publicly-judged, involving a balancing act and the need for student-centricity. Formation of staff was found to be vital and principals acknowledged that effective RECs met with staff over prayer, liturgy and sacraments, or performed them themselves.
Question 1: How do you experience the Religious Education Coordinator’s role in regards to the following? Member of the School Executive, liaison with the parish and the parish priest, leader of a faculty/learning, formation of faculty and of whole staff, prayer/liturgy/sacraments, resource management/stewardship.

1.6 Resource management/stewardship

Themes identified for all ten groups for Question 1, part 6

- Principals felt the REC role could be improved by current resources, RECs becoming a guide to materials, quality resources, increased REC knowledge of resource management.
- Principals felt RECs did not manage resources effectively, spending too much and not allowing enough to be used.
- RECs are responsible for scope, sequence, resources, and stewardship
- RECs are constrained by budgets.
- None of these responses were found to be relevant to the experience of REC with regard to resource management and stewardship.
- Principals felt with regard to resources for RECs that resources were available, but were sometimes used on ineffective resources.
- Principals observed a lack of knowledge in RECs on resources.
- Principals found RECs managed resources effectively.
- Principals felt RECs resource management was constrained by time.
- Principals found that RECs managed resources effectively by having sufficient resources, coming up with a budget, focusing on needs, having leadership team involved in RE.
- Principals found the REC management of staff weakened by the breadth of role, lack of teacher assistance, lack of REC priority and respect.
- REC a formation/mission leader as a positive steward in the school and this makes it important for the school.

Summary of themes identified across all groups for Question 1, part 6

- Principals found RECs managed resources effectively within the time constraints
- Principals felt RECs did not manage resources effectively, spending too much and not allowing enough to be used.
- Principals found the REC management of staff weakened by the breadth of role, lack of teacher assistance, lack of REC priority and respect.
- Principals felt that resources were available, but were sometimes used on ineffective resources.
- REC a formation/mission leader as a positive steward in the school and this makes it important for the school.
Principal responses to Question 1, part 6

Resource management and stewardship within the role of RECs was cited as being important for the school with most RECs managing resources effectively within the time constraints. However, principals did identify a lack of effective resource management as a concern. Principals acknowledged that REC management of staff was weakened by the broadness of the REC role, a lack of teacher assistance and a lack of REC priority and respect. Principals stated that while resources were available for RECs they were sometimes used ineffectively, with some RECs spending too much, or not allowing enough resources to be used.
Question 2: If the purpose of Religious Education is to bring students into an intimate relationship with Jesus Christ, then what should the ideal curriculum look like?

Themes identified for all ten groups for Question 2

- Principals felt that the RE curriculum should include Scripture, opportunities for teacher learning to form expert teachers, purposeful activities, links between school and home, sharing modelled learning, quadrants and praxis frameworks, the Timperley model, sound doctrine, contemporary prayers, include opportunities to teach other teachers, current resources.
- Principals felt RE teachers should be innovative, reflective, addressing student senses/heart/mind, project based, inquiry based, contemporary.
- Principals felt that RE curriculum should include more praxis, links to home and family, consideration of changing needs of community, adaptive to different faith levels, choice of presentation, technology.
- Principals felt RE curriculum should be rigorous, based on research, considerate of different habits of church attendance, deep, in line with knowledge/action/mystery, emotional, intimate, connected to shared experience.
- Principals felt RE curriculum should include Scripture, tradition, personal relevance, active demonstration of learning, concrete assessment, a spiritual approach rather than a unit approach.
- Principals felt that RE curriculum should be relevant to children’s lives, Scripture and doctrine-based, better discussed and evaluated, built around feasts, investigative, rigorous, traditional, flexible.
- Principals felt that RE curriculum should include differential teaching styles, hard core teaching and assessing, staff development opportunities, igniting of tradition.
- Principals felt RE curriculum should include Scripture, student life experiences, symbolism, ritual, Feast Days, prayer, children-built prayers.
- Principals felt RE curriculum should be life-based, linked to Christian story and Gospels, experience-based in assessment.
- Principals felt RE curriculum needed to improve on teacher knowledge, development of sound learning theory, development of staff retreat schedules, planning of hunger for spirituality.
- RECs believe the curriculum should include Scripture, human understandings, faith development, devotion, social justice, retreats and less doctrine.
- RECs believe the curriculum should be experiential, active, hands-on, child-centric and community-based.
- Principals felt that RE curriculum needed to include spelling and grammar, faith formation development, relevant language in teaching, traditional feast days, glossary of terms, visual aids, songs, traditional prayers, Vatican II, appropriate technological resources.
• Principals felt that RE curriculum needed to be well-written, unambiguous, modern, growing, clear in intent, open to discussion with children.
• Principals felt that RE curriculum needed to include teachers who have faith, are clear, recognised individually.
• Principals felt that RE curriculum needed to include Scripture, deep study of sacraments, the role and mission of the Church, traditions of the Church, prayer and liturgy, social justice, Church history, spiral content, opportunities for further student study.
• Principals felt that RE curriculum needed to be collaborative with students, meaningful, relevant, real, experiential, broad, diverse, student-centric.
• Principals felt that RE curriculum needed to include Scripture, human understandings, student experiences, faith development, devotion, faith, community service, retreats.
• Principals felt that RE curriculum needed to be experiential, hands-on, action based, relevant, student-centred, personalised, recognise diverse faith-journeys, school-connected, whole-school/community-based.
• Principals felt that RE should include retreat days that create experiences.
• Principals felt RE curriculum was affected by costs, school SES, staffing, cultural backgrounds, risk assessment.

Summary of themes identified across all groups for Question 2
• Principals felt the RE curriculum should include:
  o Scripture, opportunities for teacher learning to form expert teachers, purposeful activities, links between school and home, sharing modelled learning, quadrants and praxis frameworks, sound doctrine, contemporary prayers;
  o personal relevance, active demonstration of learning, concrete assessment, a spiritual approach rather than a unit approach;
  o differential teaching styles, hard core teaching and assessing, staff development opportunities, igniting of tradition;
  o student life experiences, symbolism, ritual, Feast Days, prayer, children-built prayers;
  o human understandings, faith development, devotion, social justice, retreats and less doctrine;
  o faith formation development, glossary of terms, visual aids, songs, traditional prayers, Vatican II, appropriate technological resources;
  o deep study of sacraments, the role and mission of the Church, traditions of the Church, prayer and liturgy, social justice, Church history, spiral content, opportunities for further student study; and
  o devotion, community service, retreats.
• Principals felt the RE curriculum should be:
  - be rigorous, based on research, considerate of different habits of church attendance, deep, in line with knowledge/action/mystery, emotional, intimate, connected to shared experience;
  - life-based, linked to Christian story and Gospels, experience-based in assessment;
  - well-written, unambiguous, modern, growing, clear in intent, open to discussion with children;
  - collaborative with students, meaningful, relevant, real, experiential, broad, diverse, student-centric; and
  - experiential, hands-on, action-based, relevant, student-centred, personalised, diverse in its recognition of faith journeys, school-connected, whole school/community based.

Principal responses to Question 2
The ideal RE curriculum should bring students into an intimate relationship with Jesus Christ. To achieve this it should be student-centred and consider student experiences including different faith journeys so that it is meaningful and relevant. The curriculum should be based on the sacraments, the role and mission of the Church, prayer and liturgy. It should be nested in its community by linking it to the home and parish.
Question 3: If RE involves teachers teaching and students learning about the Catholic faith, evaluate Sharing Our Story according to its strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and challenges?

Themes identified for all ten groups for Question 3

- Principals felt that the SOS program should include theological background, praxis, celebration of Jesus/me connection, technology, differentiation of approach, more stories, TEC triad, aligned QT.
- Principals felt that the SOS program should be experiential, committed to learning who students are, system-supported, well-timed (sacraments), inclusive of younger students.
- Principals felt that the SOS program would be improved with current resources, lack of repetitive Bible readings, more stories, involvement with families, prayer boxes.
- Principals felt that the SOS program was proven, commonly-used across diocese, critical to Catholic identity, lacking in differentiation in local contexts.
- Principals felt that the SOS program needed flexibility, student-centricity, current resources, challenges to teacher and principal faith, to partner schools, on-going formation, better connection of teachers to Church, remedial material for late-starters.
- Principals felt that SOS was weakened by lack of resources, reliance on TWL, inaccessibility of units, heavy doctrine, over-reliance on sample pathways, too much Scripture, too much life experience at times, lack of technology, lack of opportunities for student input.
- Principals felt that SOS teachers lacked resources, were not familiar with RE, did not learn professionally, lacked engagement with unit, lacked deep grounding in faith, were time constrained, needed retreat days, lacked RLA training, needed evangelisation (new teachers).
- Principals felt that SOS’s place in the school was inhibited by other KLAs, was not timetabled well, was not monitored, lacked reading time, lacked guided reading.
- Principals felt that SOS was strong in its use of praxis, senior units, technological base, doctrine, connection to Scripture, integrity, informed nature, direction, start-base for new teachers, theological background.
- Principals felt that SOS was weakened by lack of teacher background, alignment with RLA, assumptions of student knowledge, assumptions of teacher knowledge, haphazard scope and sequence, lack of teacher engagement, overburden of content, outdated resources, disconnect with units.
- Principals felt that SOS teachers needed engagement with content, professional development, training in technology, pedagogical understanding, leadership skills in formation, clarity, rigour, range of activities, connect to units by contribution to them, up-skilling.
- Principals felt that SOS needed to be more contemporary, account for non-Catholic school graduates, inclusive of a staff resource base.
• Principals felt that SOS needed to include adolescent issues, diversity, Church history, online modules, community programs.
• Principals felt that SOS was strengthened by its range of online sources, strong Scriptural basis.
• Principals felt that SOS was weakened by the removal of relationships/sexuality/morality from Stage 5, lack of Catholic teachers, lack of connection between Scripture and life.
• Principals felt that SOS teachers needed to be technologically knowledgeable, confident, holistic in their understanding of Scripture, provide research and resources, aware of the needs of conservative students.

Themes identified across all groups for Question 3
• Strengths
  o Principals felt that the SOS program was proven, commonly used across the diocese, critical to Catholic identity
  o Principals felt that SOS was strong in its use of praxis, senior units, technological base, doctrine, connection to Scripture, integrity, informed nature, direction, a start-base for new teachers.

Principal responses to Question 3 (strengths)
According to principals the SOS program is proven, and as a result of its common use across the diocese, it has become critical to Catholic identity. The key strengths of the SOS program include its use of praxis and connection to Scripture.

Themes identified across all groups for Question 3
• Weaknesses
  o Principals felt that SOS was weakened by lack of resources, reliance on TWL, inaccessibility of units, heavy doctrine, over reliance on sample pathways, too much Scripture, too much life experience at times, lack of technology, lack of opportunities for student input.
  o Principals felt that SOS teachers were not familiar with RE, did not learn professionally, lacked engagement with unit, lacked deep grounding in faith, were time constrained, needed retreat days, lacked RLA training, needed evangelisation.
  o Principals felt that SOS was weakened by the removal of relationships/sexuality/morality from Stage 5, lack of Catholic teachers, lack of connection between Scripture and life.
  o Principals felt that SOS was weakened by lack of teacher background, alignment with RLA, assumptions of student knowledge, assumptions of teacher knowledge, haphazard scope and sequence, lack of teacher engagement, overburden of content, outdated resources, disconnect with units.
Principal responses to Question 3 (weaknesses)
Weaknesses of the SOS program, according to principals, stem from a lack of resources and connection between Scripture and life. Principals felt teachers were not familiar with RE and thus lacked engagement with the unit, and, due to time constraints, lacked training. A lack of teacher engagement, the overburden of content and the outdated resources weakened the program. Some principals found that teachers lacked deep grounding in faith, and a lack of Catholic teachers caused disconnection between the subject-matter and the students. The removal of relationships, sexuality and morality from Stage 5 was also cited as a weakness within the program.

Themes identified across all groups for Question 3
• Opportunities
  o Principals felt that the SOS program should include theological background, praxis, celebration of Jesus/me connection, technology, differentiation of approach, more stories, TEC triad, aligned QT.
  o Principals felt that the SOS program should be experiential, committed to learning who students are, system supported, well-timed (sacraments), inclusive of younger students.
  o Principals felt that the SOS program would be improved with current resources, lack of repetitive Bible readings, more stories, involvement with families, prayer boxes.

Principal responses to Question 3 (opportunities)
The SOS program could be improved by updating resources and making the program experiential. Principals felt that the program would benefit from including theological background, praxis and more involvement with families. More interaction with the students so as to learn who they are, as well as being more inclusive of younger students were suggestions made by principals to improve the program. A personal approach that included more stories, fewer repetitive Bible readings and better-timed sacraments would be likely to be beneficial.

Themes identified across all groups for Question 3
• Challenges
  o Principals felt that the SOS program needed flexibility, student-centricity, current resources, challenge to teacher and principal faith, to partner schools, on-going formation, better connection of teachers to Church, remedial material for late-starters.
  o Principals felt that SOS’s place in the school was inhibited by other KLAs, was not timetabled well, was not monitored, lacked reading time, lacked guided reading.
  o Principals felt that SOS teachers needed engagement with content, professional development, training in technology, pedagogical understanding, leadership skills in formation, clarity, rigour, range of activities, connect to units by contribution to them, up-skilling.
Principals felt that SOS teachers needed to be technologically knowledgeable, confident, holistic in their understanding of Scripture, provided research and resources, aware of the needs of conservative students.

Principal responses to Question 3 (challenges)
The SOS program posed various challenges for principals as many cited the need for updated resources so as to encourage better engagement with the content. Principals felt SOS teachers needed to be more technologically savvy, confident and holistic in their understanding of the Scriptures. Other key learning areas were also seen as inhibiting the SOS program, as the program was not timetabled well, was not monitored and lacked guided reading time. The provision of research and resources, as well as awareness of the needs of conservative students was cited as potential solutions to some of the challenges facing principals in the provision of the SOS program.
Question 4: Comment on the pedagogical approaches to teaching Religious Education in your school.

Themes identified for all ten groups for Question 4

- Principals placed value on aspects of RE pedagogy that included praxis, technology, retelling stories/Scripture storytelling, rich assessment tasks, use of prior knowledge, religious symbols, liturgy, songs, music, meditation, social justice, rituals of the Church.
- Principals felt pedagogy in RE could be improved by not using halls as sacred spaces, changing culture/words, teaching and showing responses to Mass.
- Principals placed value on aspects of RE pedagogy, including prayer, connections between church and family, lived experience, meaning to the teaching of RE, use of multi-media.
- Principals felt RE pedagogy would be improved by reintegration of concepts, reinvigoration of SOS, an increase of RE personnel, improvement of formation process for leadership teams, increased technology, up-skilling of teachers, differentiation, project-based learning, increased student-centricity, increased staff confidence, permeation of RE through all KLAs, team teaching, open plan teaching.
- Principals placed value on aspects of RE pedagogy, including students’ connection with the Christian story, faith in action, cooperative learning, quality teaching across KLAs, use of technology and the internet, program-builders for teachers.
- Principals felt that RE pedagogy would be improved by update of SOS and focus placed on more than 'head knowledge.'
- Principals expressed a lack of knowledge and understanding of current teaching of RE in classrooms.
- Principals felt RE pedagogy was strengthened by project-based learning, a traditional approach to teaching, passion-led storytelling, agreed practice, catechism, consistency in diocese, Angelus introduction, learning intentions, success criteria.
- Principals felt RE pedagogy needed improvement in level of language used (appropriate to students), teacher discussions of strategies to teach RE.
- Principals placed value on certain aspects of RE pedagogy, including evangelisation, catechesis and shared praxis, differentiated teaching, professional development on exploring Scripture.
- Principals felt that RE pedagogy would be improved by increased praxis, lack of repetition, connection with students in K-6 range, praxis-experienced teachers, match between units in sacramental SOS program, increase in status of RE, increased principal knowledge of RE teaching, better connection to the Gospel, more focus on Feast Days.
- Principals saw opportunities in RE pedagogy for the use of ipads, updating units and resources, authentic Catholic sites, Bible on ipad and in physical copy, use of the Pope app, use of the national curriculum and its language.
• Principals placed value on certain aspects of RE pedagogy, including project-based learning, student feeling of ownership, use of technology, RE teachers having deep knowledge.

• Principals felt that RE pedagogy would be improved by lack of text-book pedagogy, an understanding by students of the importance of RE.

Summary of themes identified across all groups for Question 4

• Principals felt pedagogical aspects involving personal acceptance/conviction/passion by either the teacher alone or both teacher and student were important, as, for example:
  - Rituals of the Church, prayer, connections between church and family, lived experience
  - Students connecting with the Christian story, faith in action
  - Focus placed on more than head-knowledge, passion-led story telling
  - Evangelisation, catechesis and shared praxis – teaching by teachers with experience to bring to praxis
  - Better connection to the Gospel and more focus on feast days

• Principals felt pedagogy was strengthened when successful secular pedagogical techniques were implemented, for example:
  - Retelling stories, rich assessment tasks, use of prior knowledge, differentiated project-based learning, cooperative learning, a traditional approach to teaching, agreed practice, a level of language appropriate to students, differentiated teaching, lack of repetition, and a focus on deep knowledge

Principal responses to Question 4

RE pedagogy was most influential when it promoted student conviction and passion by teachers and students. Passion-led storytelling promoted greater connections with the Gospel. Project-based learning that provided differentiated learning experiences promoted deeper understandings of Biblical experiences.
Religious Education Coordinator interviews

The same process was followed for REC interviews as it was for principals.

Question 1: How do you experience the Religious Education Coordinator’s role in regards to the following? Member of the School Executive, liaison with the parish and the parish priest, leader of a faculty/learning, formation of faculty and of whole staff, prayer/liturgy/sacraments, resource management/stewardship.

1.1 Member of the School Executive

Themes identified for all ten groups for Question 1, Part 1

- The RECs role included executive and stage leadership.
- The REC duties included classroom visits, learning walks, grades, literacy, supervision and modelling.
- The RECs felt included in providing opinions, interviews and decisions.
- RECs feel excluded, because their opinion isn’t sought, they are not consulted, their role and position is not valued; they are also excluded by gender.
- RECs experience a lack of equality in the area of promotion.
- RECs sometimes feel included when they are consulted.
- The REC role includes promoting the Catholic faith, and is becoming more like an AP role.
- RECs felt their role was not sought after, valued, encouraged, supported, or seen as a leadership position. It was sometimes resented by parishioners, and was more valued in smaller schools.
- The REC experience depends on executive support.
- Negative aspects of the REC role included skill-restriction, time and workload.
- RECs faced location-based challenges.
- The REC’s influence in their role was impacted by the assistant principal and principal, and included major issues and hiring duties.
- The REC’s attendance at meetings was impacted by the school’s layout, and was sometimes excluded by class time.
- RECs felt the pay hierarchy structure was unfair.
- RECs felt their release time was not consistent.
- Some RECs have discussion and input in the executive.
- The REC role has been experienced as giving a voice to faith and the community goal, but sometimes overburdening.
- RECs find the leadership aspect of the role good, and pathway to principal or assistant principal.
- RECs saw their role on the executive as maintaining the high profile of RE.
- REC duties were seen as increasing, becoming unmanageable and constrained by inadequate release time.
• Some RECs experience the hierarchy of RE as being given great priority, especially in school events, others observe it on the third rung of school.
• Some RECs experience their role on the executive as HOD, while some believe there is no role.

Summary of themes identified across all groups for Question 1, Part 1
• Role includes executive and stage leadership; RECS felt included in providing opinions, interviews and decisions.
• RECS feel excluded, their opinions are not sought and they are not consulted and the experience is dependent upon executive support.
• Release time was either inadequate or inconsistent.
• RE given high priority in some schools, while RECs in other schools felt it was not a priority at all.
• REC position lacks equality in promotion, pay hierarchy unfair, and the role restricted their skills, and negatively impact on their time and workload.

REC responses to Question 1, Part 1.
The role of RECs as members of the school executive includes leadership at both the executive and stage level. RECs felt they were included when providing opinions, participating in interviews and decisions, however they felt excluded when they were not consulted. RECs found that their experiences were dependent upon executive support. Most RECs commented on the inadequacy or inconsistency of release time and felt that RE was considered a high priority in some schools, while in others it was not a priority at all. Equality in promotion, remuneration and the role itself were noted as restrictive concerns and negatively impacted upon their time and workload.

Question 1: How do you experience the Religious Education Coordinator’s role in regards to the following? Member of the School Executive, liaison with the parish and parish priest, leader of a faculty/learning, formation of faculty and of whole staff, prayer/liturgy/sacraments, resource management/stewardship.

1.2 Liaison with the Parish and Parish Priest
Themes identified for all ten groups for Question 1, Part 2
• Sacramental work was important, and the responsibility of the parish, with the REC on the team.
• Working relationships with priests were good, close, regular and involved priest-led staff PD.
• The level and quality of involvement depends on the individual priest.
• Liaison with priests is dependent on the relationship being good and the priest is approachable.
• RECs found communication with priests was unproblematic.
• Some RECs found priests’ conservatism with regard to the liturgy a problem, others expected their views.
• Relationships between RECs and priests were positive when they were easily and accessible.
• Multiple parishes made the relationship between priest and RECs difficult and time consuming.
• RECs have a negative parish liaison experienced based on time restrictions.
• RECs have a positive parish liaison experience based on priests who are supportive, educated in their opinions, sharing, providing quality feedback. A convenient parish location also facilitates this.
• RECs found some priests supportive; others presented difficulty by being less visible, disconnected by multiple parishes and reluctant to visit.
• RECs found presenting students for first sacraments difficult.
• RECs find the relationship with their priest depends on personality and politics, and makes available their different strengths.
• RECs relationships with their priests are affected by proximity.

Summary of themes identified across all groups for Question 1, Part 2

• Relationships between RECs and PP were mostly positive but noticeably dependent upon the individual personalities of the priests.
• Negative relationships were mostly due to time restrictions and dealing with multiple parishes which is time-consuming.
• Relationships are affected by proximity – convenient parish locations facilitate positive experiences.

REC responses to Question 1, Part 2

The role of RECs as liaison with the parish and the parish priest is mostly positive; however it is dependent upon the individual personalities of the priests. Negative relationships were mostly due to time restrictions and the difficulties involved with dealing with multiple parishes. Proximity was a key factor, a convenient parish location facilitated positive experiences, while multiple parishes and distance resulted in priests being less visible and disconnected from the school.

Question 1: How do you experience the Religious Education Coordinator’s role in regards to the following? Member of the School Executive, liaison with the parish and the parish priest, leader of a faculty/learning, formation of faculty and of whole staff, prayer/liturgy/sacraments, resource management/stewardship.
1.3 Leader of a faculty/learning

Themes identified for all ten groups for Question 1, Part 3

- RECds have a range of teaching related duties, including checking programs, supervising classes, anything religious, social justice, and pastoral care.
- RECds have a range of church-related duties, including leading stage, choir, prayer, altar service, IT, cleaning, robe coordination and fundraising.
- RECds feel the role’s knowledge expectations are based on its religiousness, and are too high.
- RECds need to show leadership across all subjects.
- RECds feel there is not enough time in their role.
- Some RECds found staff overly dependent, hostile and negative, while others found staff supportive.
- RECds felt that with regard to their duties some staff asked for more, believing the role required it.
- RECds felt balance was essential in regard to their duties, and that being part of an RE or liturgy team facilitated balance.
- RECds feel they cannot be competent in both leading a faculty and learning.
- RECds felt that RE was not properly recognised in workload.
- Some RECds found accreditation a difficulty, others essential.
- RECds did not find accreditation common enough, useful or funded.
- RECds observe staff becoming involved in RE to achieve a full load, believing anyone can teach RE.
- RECds find meetings constrained by time.

Summary of themes identified across all groups for Question 1, Part 3

- RECds have a wide range of teaching related duties and church-related duties.
- There is insufficient time to perform all these duties within their role.
- Expectations of RECds are very high; many staff believe RECds should be doing more.
- RECds found accreditation a difficulty, some felt it to be essential.
- RE not properly recognised in workload, some staff becoming involved in RE just to achieve a full load under the assumption anyone can teach RE.

REC responses to Question 1, Part 3

The REC role as leader of faculty/learning involves a broad range of both teaching related duties and church-related duties. Time was an overwhelming concern as many could not find enough time to perform all the duties required of them. The expectations of RECds are very high and many staff believe the RECds should actually be doing more. Some RECds found accreditation to be a difficulty, while others felt it was essential. RECds found that RE was not properly recognised in the workload of staff, with some
staff becoming involved in RE only to achieve a full load, operating under the assumption anyone can teach RE.

Question 1: How do you experience the Religious Education Coordinator’s role in regards to the following? Member of the School Executive, liaison with the parish and the parish priest, leader of a faculty/learning, formation of faculty and of whole staff, prayer/liturgy/sacraments, resource management/stewardship.

1.4 Formation of a faculty and of whole staff

Themes identified for all ten groups for Question 1, Part 4

• The formation of faculty and of whole staff role involves support of parents, practicum students, and children and to achieve accreditation and WYD.
• The role involves leadership by example in organising events, professional development, returning people to the Church and guiding them to love religion and God.
• The role involves classroom duties, including teaching and ensuring the school is authentically Catholic.
• The REC role involves prayer, and the need for RECs to develop their spirituality.
• RECs found formation of the goal required ownership and creativity.
• RECs found formation rewarding and challenging, but felt the need for upskilling.
• RECs felt formation was not a high priority, lower than literacy and maths.
• RECs felt it was sometimes assumed that formation would occur naturally.
• In the role in supporting staff, RECs feel valued, sought after but time poor.
• The REC role involves a focus on adult faith.
• In terms of resources, RECs value good resources and feel a database would be useful.
• In terms of formation, RECs felt unfairly burdened by it, and that the CEO should prepare it.
• RECs found formation challenging and rewarding.
• RECs find formation hard to achieve and constrained by time.
• RECs believe formation should be ongoing, simple and integrated into all staff interactions.

Summary of themes identified for all groups for Question 1, Part 4

• REC role involves supporting parents, students and children, as well as leadership by example and classroom duties.
• RECs felt professional development and up-skilling to be needed so as to improve formation of faculty and staff.
• RECs felt valued in supporting staff but found time to be an issue.
• RECs value good resources and feel a database would be useful.
• RECs found formation to be both challenging and rewarding.
• Some felt unfairly burdened by the responsibility and believe the CEO should prepare it.

REC responses to Question 1, Part 4
The role of the RECs in the formation of faculty and staff was found to be both challenging and rewarding. Some RECs felt unfairly burdened by the responsibility and believed the CEO should prepare it. RECs felt professional development was needed to improve the formation of faculty and staff, and noted that good resources were vital, identifying a database as something that would be useful. While most RECs felt valued by staff due to their supporting role, many found time constraints to be an issue.

Question 1: How do you experience the Religious Education Coordinator’s role in regards to the following? Member of the School Executive, liaison with the parish and the parish priest, leader of a faculty/learning, formation of faculty and of whole staff, prayer/liturgy/sacraments, resource management/stewardship.

1.5 Prayer, liturgy, sacraments
Themes identified for all ten groups for Question 1, Part 5
• Prayer, liturgy and sacrament duties for the REC must involve everyone.
• It must be ensured that staff are experienced in these areas.
• RECs must be inventive.
• REC’s role is to lead prayer for staff at meetings, Advent and Lent.
• The REC’s role is dependent on the parish priest, but includes reminders in newsletters.
• RECs found the priest facilitated their work, and that their proactivity was essential.
• Some RECs found the priests’ conservatism with regard to liturgy a problem, while others found it opened the opportunity for other celebrations.
• The REC role involves facilitation, pastoral duties, fundraising, prayers and liturgy, dealing with complaints and questions, preparing the newsletter, church cleaning and leading staff prayer.
• The REC role involves maintaining a strong tradition, role modelling and nurturing.
• RECs found that prayer resources and liturgy needed more support.
• RECs ensure liturgy is high quality.
• RECs find student involvement with prayer, liturgy and sacraments good, meaningful and important.
• RECs are challenged by the space of venues.
• RECs believe they need improvement in prayer, liturgy and sacraments.

Summary of themes identified across all groups for Question 1, Part 5
• Duties of RECs include prayer, liturgy and sacrament which need improvement.
• These duties must involve everyone.
• Space of venues was a challenge, quality of liturgy needs to be high so RECs need to be inventive.
• Role is dependent on PP who facilitated their work but proactivity was essential.

REC responses to Question 1, Part 5
The duties of RECs with regards to prayer, liturgy and sacrament require improvement according to RECs. While the role is dependent upon the parish priest, the REC still needs to be proactive. It is important that they be experienced in these areas as the role requires the maintenance of tradition, modelling and nurturing of staff and students. Prayer resources, support for liturgy and venue space were cited as issues that require addressing so as to improve the REC’s ability to fulfil their duties.

Question 1: How do you experience the Religious Education Coordinator’s role in regards to the following? Member of the School Executive, liaison with the parish and the parish priest, leader of a faculty/learning, formation of faculty and of whole staff, prayer/liturgy/sacraments, resource management/stewardship.

1.6 Resource management/stewardship
Themes identified for all ten groups for Question 1, Part 6
• RECs need to be versatile, proactive leaders.
• RECs need to be approachable.
• RECs are responsible for resource management.
• RECs feel a lack of respect for borrowed resources, especially religious items.
• RECs feel resource funding is limited and needs careful management and more consultation.
• RECs and not given authority on resource use, particularly if they are from outside the diocese.
• RECs found time, staying current, budgets and music to be challenges in their role.
• RECs have a section with the school library.
• RECs find resource management challenging.
• RECs have a budget and are aware of it.
• RECs feel time is a barrier to managing resources, specifically purchasing, reviewing, cleaning up and putting them away, and souring quality items.
• RECs found sourcing resources for secondary schools difficult.
• RECs found there was little funding for RE.
• RECs find teachers do not use resources and have no incentive to use resources.
• RECs use a range of digital resources including the internet and YouTube.
• RECs experience a range of difficulties in resource management, including organisation, storage, time, space and unfairness of responsibility.
Summary of themes identified across all groups for Question 1, Part 6

- RECs are responsible for resource management but experience of range of difficulties.
- Storage, time, space, organisation and little funding are all major concerns.
- Role requires RECs to be versatile, proactive and approachable.
- Need to use a range of sources including digital.

REC responses to Question 1, Part 6

Resource management within the role of the REC was found to be difficult for a number of reasons. Storage, time, space, organisation and minimal funding were cited as major barriers to effective resource management. RECs are required to be versatile, proactive and approachable but find it difficult when borrowed resources are not treated with respect and they are not given authority to use resources outside the diocese. Use of digital sources from the Internet and YouTube was found to be beneficial, but many RECs find that teachers don’t use the resources and have no incentive to do so.

Question 2: If the purpose of Religious Education is to bring students into an intimate relationship with Jesus Christ, then what should the ideal curriculum look like?

Themes identified for all ten groups for Question 2

- RECs believe assessment should be skill- and performance-based and include outcomes.
- RECs believe the curriculum should include meditation, literacy and formation.
- With regard to digital resources, RECs are divided and want input opportunities.
- With regard to Church content, RECs want the curriculum to include Tradition, Scripture and to be more in-depth.
- RECs believe the curriculum should include Scripture, social justice, foundation, Church customs and sacraments.
- RECs believe the curriculum should be hands-on, vigorous, online, current and in-depth.
- RECs believe the curriculum should include Scripture, reflection, traditional and contemporary content, and doctrinal statements.
- RECs believe the curriculum should be driven by knowledge, especially of Jesus, driven by the ‘Body, Heart, Mind’ ideology, relevant, contemporary, traditional, sequential and spiral.
- RECs believe the curriculum should include Scripture, prayer and reflection
- RECs believe the curriculum should focus on action of knowledge, Catholic beliefs and Christian beliefs.
- RECs believe the curriculum should include Scripture, prayer, Catholicism.
- RECs believe the curriculum should be age-relevant, inquiry-based, globally inclusive and generally inclusive.
• RECs believe the curriculum should include Scripture, meditation, variety (especially in prayers), charitable work, reflection, and current language prayers.
• RECs believe the curriculum should be based in the present day, liveable, holistic and formatted.
• RECs believe the curriculum should include Scripture, Jesus, Church teachings, Church traditions, life experience, Christian praxis, levelled activities, support for newcomers to the faith, differentiated teacher and child versions, marking criteria and rubrics, tangible activities, PDF versions, portable digital versions, simple outcomes and standardised programming proforma.
• RECs believe the curriculum should be practical, current, online, filtered and managed.
• RECs felt the curriculum needed to include Scripture, faith development, devotion, ministry/community service, school happenings, social justice, retreats.
• RECs felt curriculum needed to be experiential, hands-on, reflective of human understandings, child-centric, action-based, respectful of diversity, relatable, community-based, and less concerned with doctrine.
• RECs felt the curriculum needed to include thorough resources and programs, preparation for a relationship with Christ, understanding of students without religion.
• RECs felt curriculum needed to be relevant, and taught by teachers living the faith.

Summary of themes identified across all groups for Question 2

• Curriculum should include Scriptures, traditions, prayer, reflection, life experiences and social justice.
• Should be relevant, contemporary, age-relevant, inclusive and practical.
• Needs to be interactive and hands-on through use of good resources and programs.
• Focus on knowledge, beliefs and faith development.

REC responses to Question 2

RECs felt that if the purpose of RE is to bring students into an intimate relationship with Jesus Christ, the ideal curriculum should include Scriptures, prayer, traditions, reflection, life experiences and social justice. RECs felt this could be achieved by ensuring the curriculum is relevant, contemporary, inclusive and practical. Focusing on knowledge, beliefs and faith development, as well making the curriculum interactive and hands-on through the use of good resources and programs would also be beneficial.

**Question 3**: If RE involves teachers teaching and students learning about the Catholic faith, evaluate *Sharing Our Story* according to its strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and challenges?
Themes identified for all ten groups for Question 3

- RECs felt SOS’s strengths were its student-centricity, relevant theology, progression of units, connectedness of Scriptures, promotion of partnerships between home, school and parish, accessibility and relateability.
- RECs felt SOS was weakened by its excess of units, excess focus on praxis, shallowness, lack of challenging pathways, missing elements/concepts, units not built incrementally, out-of-date resources, lack of technology use and lack of variety.
- RECs felt SOS was challenged by lack of teacher knowledge, non-Catholic student numbers, student entry into lessons, lack of Mass attendance, shallowness, excess of units, lack of technological resources, lack of funding and lack of structure.
- RECs felt SOS was made strong by its relevance, creativity, theological/educational background, ability to move within praxis.
- RECs felt SOS was weakened by its shallowness, weak pathways, out-of-date resources, lack of technology, lack of Scripture variety and incompleteness.
- RECs felt opportunities for improving SOS included increasing rigour of program, increase of technology access, increase in links to life experience.
- RECs felt SOS could be improved with sequential units, clearer outcomes, more Marian units, more assessment units, current resources, better incorporation of prayer and celebration, better unit progression.
- RECs felt SOS was weakened by missing pieces, lack of negotiation and knowledge of curriculum.
- RECs feel SOS’s strengths lie in its diversity, spiritual underpinnings and definition of core areas of RE.
- RECs feel SOS’s weaknesses lie in its shallowness, restrictive praxis, focus on narrow life experience, out-of-date resources, lack of integration of family, lack of structure.
- RECs feel SOS should included teachers of faith, quality resources, deeply engaged with theology, encouraging of faith in family, current, and make fewer assumptions about assumptive students’ backgrounds.
- RECs feel SOS’s weaknesses lie in its shallowness, restrictive praxis, lack of focus on student experience, limited or dated resources, lack of focus on tradition and doctrine, repetitiveness, lack of integration into classes, lack of assessment of experiences.
- RECs feel SOS could be improved by increase in student/family commitment, teaching with rigour, increased recognition of RE’s importance, increased focus on social justice, involvement of parents, relationship building.
- RECs felt SOS’s strength lay in its theological and educational grounding, adult formation, accessibility for teachers, ability to be integrated into lessons, relevance, diversity and activities.
• RECs feel SOS could be improved by current technological resources, a reconsidered assessment style, a more diverse assessment style.

• RECs feel SOS is weakened by lack of teacher engagement, online location of syllabus, lack of encouragement to praxis, lack of building on current syllabus, time constraints, lack of balance in assessment, dated resources.

• RECs felt SOS could be improved by increased diversity and inclusion, recognition of the needs of non-Catholic students, increased time and status of RE.

• RECs felt SOS should be relevant, streamlined, easy to apply, inclusive of appropriate staff training, diverse, and Jesus-centred.

• RECs felt SOS was weakened by its lack of recognition of different faith journeys, lack of complexity, lack of relevance to student lives, lack of direction, content variation, time constraints, waste of resources, lack of life skill extension units.

• RECs felt SOS could be improved by access of experience of other teachers, uniformity of scope and sequence, flexibility in liturgy, increased rigour, more direction.

• RECs felt SOS was weakened by its repetition, focus on marginalisation, presumption of knowledge and faith, lack of engaging, current ideas.

• RECs felt SOS could be improved by increased variety, teaching in logical order, updating of ideas, introduction of a ‘basics’ level.

• RECs felt the strengths of SOS lay in its flexibility, praxis, assistance for non-Catholic students.

Summary of themes identified for all groups for Question 3

**Strengths**

• Student-centricity, relevant theology, progression of units, connection with Scriptures, promotion of connections between home, school and parish.

• Accessibility and being relatable.

• Relevant, creative, ability to move within practices - flexibility

• Diversity, spiritual underpinnings

• Theological and educational grounding

**Weaknesses**

• Excess of units, shallowness, lack of challenging pathways.

• Not incremental, out-of-date, lack of technology and variety – limited resources

• Missing parts, lacks negotiation and knowledge of curriculum.

• Focuses on narrow life experiences.

• Lacks integration with family and relevance to students’ lives.

• Repetitive, lacks engaging current ideas.

**Challenges**

• Lack of teacher knowledge, non-Catholic student numbers, lack of Mass attendance.
• Presumption of knowledge and faith.

**Opportunities**

• Sequential units, clear outcomes, more assessment units.
• Current resources, better incorporation of prayer and celebration.
• Encourage faith in the family.
• Uniformity of scope and flexibility of liturgy.
• More variety.

REC responses to Question 3

The strengths of the SOS program lie in its student-centricity and its connection with Scriptures. The program is accessible and relative with both theological and educational grounding. However RECs identified particular weaknesses within the program such as the lack of sequential or incremental units, and the number of excess units. Technology was lacking and variety was minimal due to limited resources. The curriculum is missing elements and is not flexible. RECs found it focused on narrow life experiences and thus lacked integration with families and relevance to students’ lives. The repetitive nature of the units and the lack of engaging, contemporary ideas were also cited as weaknesses within the curriculum. RECs identified a lack of teacher knowledge, the number of non-Catholic students and low Mass attendance as particular challenges facing teachers when implementing the curriculum. Some suggestions for improving the program include sequential units with clear outcomes and more assessment, as well as using current resources that better incorporate prayer and celebration. Encouraging faith in the family and providing more variety were also ways in which the program could be more successful.

**Question 4:** Comment on the pedagogical approaches to teaching Religious Education in your school.

Themes identified for all ten groups for Question 4

• RECs feel that pedagogy in Religious Education is weakened by lacking understanding of Christian praxis, poor exemplification of whole brain learning, limited resources, lack of access to church and priest.
• RECs felt that pedagogy in Religious Education would be strengthened by utilising opportunities such as QR readers, Exploring Scripture, increased diversity, meditation, multimedia, music, creative arts, connections to charisms.
• RECs felt pedagogical approaches were strengthened by Scripture-deep exploration, relevance to life, reflexivity, whole-brain learning.
• RECs felt opportunities to strengthen RE pedagogy lie in movie-adaptations of learning, prayer boxes in class, links to parish, hymn-practice, picture books, whole-school involvement, mental warm-ups.
RECs felt pedagogical approaches to RE would be strengthened by increased focus, easier to teach theoretical approaches, better use of pathways, up-skilling teachers, open-ended assessment tasks, more support.

RECs felt pedagogical approaches to RE would be strengthened by deeper curriculum, student-centric programming, promotion of vitality of Gospel, whole-school involvement, teacher innovation, professional development, better links between school and parish.

Strategies for teaching RE better include involving art, craft, performance, the Bible, research, thinking, meditation, story-telling, books, book activities, IT, songs, Mass kits, quizzes, professional development, hot seat, PowerPoint, hymns, modified Blooms/Gardiners theory, priest visits, knitting club.

RECs believed RE should be taught by student leaders, in prime time, in a focused way, involving fundraising by students, including Easter units.

RECs felt that RE teaching would be strengthened by increases in professional development support, status of RE as a subject, unlocking Scripture, staff confidence, timetabling, block lessons, ranges of activities, focus, child-centric learning and collaborative programming.

RECs felt that RE teaching would be strengthened by increases in focus, multi-media/technology, drama and art, focused assessment, better teacher quality, investment in young teachers, artistic tools, research and creative knowledge, peer observation, team teaching, shared ideas, student engagement, formative feedback, Scripture.

RECs felt RE teaching was challenged by time constraints, lack of status of RE, lack of teachers being used in their strength areas, marking consistency, lack of knowledge of SCP, over-responsibility of RE teachers.

RECs felt RE teaching would be strengthened by prioritising staff for RE, in-servicing, resource pooling, national curriculum integration, challenge-based learning, CL connected learning.

RECs felt RE teaching was strong because of its classroom visits, theoretical and educational background, literacy practice, use of technology.

RECs felt RE teaching was challenged by teacher confidence of content, dated teaching styles.

RECs felt RE teaching could be improved by team-teaching, passionate teachers, focus on technological/critical thinking and literacy skills, real-world relevance, diversity in content, reflection, whole-school approach, collaboration.

Summary of themes identified across all groups for Question 4

- Weakened by lack of understanding of Christian praxis.
- Limited resources, lack of access to church and priest.
- Challenged by time constraints and teacher confidence and outdated teaching styles.
- Lack of status of RE
- Improvements include:
• increased diversity, better resources
• relevance to life – whole-school involvement.
• deeper curriculum student centric programs
• professional development

REC responses to Question 4
RECs felt the pedagogical approaches to teaching RE in their schools were weakened by a lack of understanding of Christian praxis and limited resources. Time constraints, as well as teacher confidence and a lack of access to the church and priest were also cited as a problem. Improvements for teaching RE include increasing diversity and the provision of better resources. Whole-school involvement was also seen to be beneficial as RE needs to be relevant to student lives. Deeper curriculum and student-centric programs are needed in addition to professional development. Focusing on technological, critical thinking and literacy skills, as well as real-world relevance was also suggested as a way in which to improve the pedagogical approach to RE.

Summary of the role of the Religious Education Coordinator for both principals and RECs as a member of the school executive
Both principals and RECs said the role of the REC was demanding and complex. Consequently, principals said that it was difficult to get quality applicants to apply for REC positions. They also suggested that REC should undertake additional qualifications, such as a Masters degree in both leadership and religious content. This increased the difficulty of appointing quality people. Some RECs said they felt as if they were a genuine member of the school executive while others said they felt excluded at times.

Summary of the role of the Religious Education Coordinator for both principals and RECs in liaising with the parish and parish priest
Both principals and RECs said the role of the REC in liaising with the parish priest was generally positive. However, they both acknowledged the relationship was personality dependent and that each tended to rely on the other to achieve desired outcomes. These factors, combined with the fact that they are both overburdened in their roles, is indicative of an environment where there is the potential for misunderstandings and for things to go wrong despite an essentially positive relationship.

Summary of the role of the Religious Education Coordinator for both principals and RECs as a faculty leader
Both principals and RECs acknowledged that faculty leadership was a critical component of overall role of the REC. RECs were regarded as role models but their capacity to excel in this capacity was often hampered by the demands their other roles made on their time. Principals also cited lack of the school’s
capacity to share the responsibilities of the REC was a problem. It was also thought the role of the REC was not fully recognised by other staff since there was an expectation RECs should do more at the faculty level.

**Summary of the role of the Religious Education Coordinator for both principals and RECs in the formation of staff**

Principals believed RECs who were successful in staff formation tended to have effective leadership skills. However, both principals and RECs thought RECs needed greater access to professional learning if they were to be successful in the formation of staff. Some RECs believed the CEO should be responsible for staff formation as it was a particularly burdensome task and required a lot of time and expertise. They saw staff religious formation as a whole-diocesan issue rather than an issue restricted to individual schools. Lack of quality time to devote to staff formation was the greatest issue identified by principals and RECs.

**Summary of the role of the Religious Education Coordinator for both principals and RECs in prayer, liturgy and the sacraments**

Principals thought RECs should be a model for all staff and the parent community in prayer, liturgy and the sacraments. Activities related to prayer, liturgy and the sacraments should be public, involve the parish priest and be student-centred. All school and parish resources should be used to increase the REC’s ability to undertake their role in these tasks.

**Summary of the role of the Religious Education Coordinator for both principals and RECs in resource management and stewardship**

Principals expressed concern over lack of resource management. Resources were thought to be used either too much or not enough. It was an area that needed to be addressed. RECs said the problem was much larger than just within their area of responsibility. Issues of funding, resource appropriateness and incentive for staff to use them were some of the issues cited. Overall, it was considered that resource management and stewardship was an area that needed more thought and attention.

**Summary for both principals and RECs of the ideal curriculum**

The ideal RE curriculum should be student-centred and consider student experiences, including different faith journeys, to bring students into an intimate relationship with Jesus Christ. The curriculum should be interactive, hands-on and based on the sacraments, the role and mission of the Church, prayer and liturgy. It should be nested in its community, linked to the home and parish while building on personal experience and promoting social justice.
Summary for both principals and RECs for the evaluation of *Sharing Our Story*

*Sharing Our Story* is well-connected to Scripture and based on student experiences. However, it lacks connection to the real life and contemporary interests of students, contemporary technology and pedagogy and lacks the opportunity for student input. It is hampered by outdated resources, lack of teacher knowledge and overburdened by content which is not flexible.

Summary for both principals and RECs for pedagogical approaches used to teach religious education

Religious education pedagogy was most influential when it promoted student conviction and passion by teachers and students. Passion-led storytelling promoted greater connections with the Gospel. Project-based learning that provided differentiated learning experiences promoted deeper understandings of biblical experiences. It was also thought that many teachers misinterpreted praxis pedagogy and that the availability of priests was limited. There was also lack of critical thinking and religious literacy or understanding of the Catholic faith and real world relevance.

Clergy interviews

Interviews with clergy were undertaken with individuals. Each interview was transcribed and analysed thematically. Emergent themes were grouped in terms of clergy involvement with schools, their knowledge of the religious education curriculum, views about the religious life of students and school personnel and, given *carte blanche*, what form should a contemporary religious education curriculum take.

Involvement with Schools

The themes that emerged across all clergy interviews were as follows:

- Priests conducted special Masses throughout the year.
- Confessions were heard a number of times throughout the year.
- Meetings with teachers occurred when needed.
- Time spent in schools ranged from a couple of hours a week to a day a week (at times) and that priests thought this was enough.
- Priests preferred to work in primary schools rather than high schools.
- Many priests felt threatened by high school environments.
- Priests felt welcomed but they didn’t feel as if they belonged.
- Priests felt that staff were not really sure how the parish priest fitted into the school.
- The impression is created that the parish priest should not be involved in the classroom or the curriculum.
- Priests said they were invited to schools often but they did not understand why as there was no purpose attached to the invitation.
• Schools seem to be too busy with their own agenda and meeting Board of Studies requirements.
• Some priests said they should not overdose students on religion.
• Principals and RECs should be supported by the parish priests rather than directed by them.

What do you know about RE curriculum?

• Priests did not know much about the RE curriculum.
• They thought general topics such as prayer and the Angelus would be in the curriculum.
• They said teachers were committed to teaching about Jesus but perhaps not as committed to Jesus in their personal lives.
• SOS needs to be reviewed because:
  o it does not achieve desired outcomes (personal commitment to Jesus);
  o there is too much intellectual content rather than attempts to integrate what is learnt into student lives; and
  o it is not in the tradition of the life of Jesus, teaching by stories and personal experiences.
• There is too much emphasis on social issues and ethics at the expense of the fundamentals of Catholicism.
• Priests did not know why but RE was thought to be failing because students don’t go to Mass – yet there is something there, the basics of the faith are still there.

Views about the religious life of students and other school personnel

• Students and the school community attend special celebrations at school.
• Nonetheless, most students, teachers and the school community are not well ‘churched’ outside school.
• Students think they know about Jesus and the Bible, the Church and religion, but, in fact, do not; neither do they understand the significance of what they should know.
• Modern services that feature singing are valued over more traditional church services. It is a problem because students value the wrong things. They need to attend a Sunday Mass to see what a real Mass should be like.
• Generally, there is a lack of building a true connection with Jesus.
• Students should not be forced into religion. They should not be compelled to do anything they don’t have a true connection with. The role of the RE is to help build that connection and if that means in conjunction with parents etc, then RE is about the parents and community as well.
• Not enough prayer and lack of recognition of the significance of prayer.
• The flame of faith is there. Students do see value in a Catholic basis for life although they are not immersed in it. They value Baptism, Easter, Christmas etc but the whole picture is not there.
• It is important that students and their parents are not judged because they are not well churched.
• Basic liturgy is necessary. Some students have lost sight of this because school Masses are ‘over the top.’
• Schools should be an active part of student and teacher religious formation but should not limit their influence to just within the school.

Given carte blanche, what form should RE take?
• There should be an emphasis on the life and stories of Christ. The person of Jesus is important so students can identify with the life in the times of Jesus and relate his life to their life.
• More should be learnt about the Trinity.
• There should be an emphasis on prayer.
• Teachers should be taught the basics of their faith. Even if they are not well churched when employed, they should be encouraged to continue to learn.
• RE at university should be re-cast to emphasise traditional Catholic faith.
• There is too much of an emphasis on social justice. The emphasis should be repositioned to the core faith.
• Relate the faith to the everyday lives of students.
• Change pedagogy to open discussion and storytelling rather than rote learning.
• Priests need to be helped to move back to being a more central part of the school.
• The curriculum should focus on love/reflection on family life and what it is to be Catholic.
• Synthesise Church knowledge with modern life issues.
• Invest most resources in the formation of teachers.
• Curriculum is not so important. It is not what should be relied upon. The Church is about building relationships between students and teachers and between them and Jesus. Almost any curriculum can be used as long as the way it is used is to build understandings and relationships.
• RE is relational and not about a curriculum.

Summary of clergy interviews
Priests were involved with schools through special Masses and other liturgical duties and thought this was enough commitment to schools. Although priests felt welcome in schools they did not feel as if they belonged in schools. They felt more comfortable in primary rather than secondary schools. Schools seemed to have agenda which were different to those of priests. Priests felt that principals and REC felt that school should be the focus of their involvement rather than religion.

Priests did not know very much about the school curriculum. They thought teachers did not live the personal commitment they taught. Priests thought Sharing Our Story did not achieve its main purpose of bringing students into a personal relationship with Jesus. They thought it was burdened with content and
lacked relevance to the everyday lives of students. Overall, the religious education in schools failed because students did not go to Sunday Mass.

Priests viewed the religious lives of students and staff less positively than they would have liked. Priests valued the traditions of the Church and felt schools were emphasising the wrong things. They felt there was a lack of emphasis on the connection with Jesus in conjunction with parents and the broader parish community. Although the flame of faith was present there was a lack of true understanding about the Church and Catholicism. Religious formation was not complete.

Priests thought a religious education curriculum should emphasise the life of Jesus and His connection with their personal lives. There should be an emphasis on prayer and religious education and should include the continued education of teachers. Social justice issues should not overshadow the basics of Catholic faith and traditions and their connection to real life. Pedagogies that include discussion and critical thinking should be emphasised over rote learning. Priests also thought they should be more central in the religious life of the school with a synthesis between Church knowledge and contemporary issues. Priests thought curriculum was over-emphasised. They thought religious education should be about building relationships between students and teachers and between them and Jesus. They thought almost any curriculum could be used to build understandings and relationships. Religious education should be relational rather than about curriculum.
Classroom observations

The diocese is divided into four regions. Two schools were purposefully selected from each region for classroom observations. The deliberate selection of schools was to ensure a representative mix of a boys’ school, a girls’ school, a coeducational school, a school from a low SES area, a school from a high SES area, and both a rural and urban school. The age range would represent the full age range of students across the diocese. It was acknowledged that most schools would meet more than one of the criteria listed above.

The purpose of the classroom observations was to monitor the implementation of the RE curriculum. Curriculum documents at each school were examined for consistency with what was centrally determined. In addition, each lesson observed was reviewed against the school RE program.

In all cases it was found that each school had a set of curriculum documents that were up-to-date and which covered the material prescribed by the CEO. It was also found that each lesson observed followed the school scope and sequence plan. Any deviations from that plan were fully documented.

Classroom observations covered four areas. They were:

- student engagement in the lesson;
- pedagogy used in teaching;
- intellectual rigour in terms of religious content; and
- connectedness to student real life experiences.

Classroom observations are reported as a summary narrative that covers these four areas for each class. It should be noted that although it was intended to observe a boy’s class this was not able to be achieved in the timeframe allocated. More than one class was observed for some year groups.

Kindergarten

From the outset, the purpose of the lesson was to make a direct connection between everyday life experiences of the children and what the lesson was about, which was Church Feast Days. Students were engaged as the lesson was activities-based. However, some of the content was beyond the ability of students to understand. It was assumed that children were literate; a child who could not read, they could not complete the activities, which were nested in a whole-class pedagogical approach. Consequently, although a genuine attempt was made to connect students with the lesson content and to use a hands-on, activities-based pedagogy, the understandings children gained from the lesson were minimal because they were tied to their ability to read. The intellectual rigour may have been high because students were expected to make the connection between their personal celebrations and those of the Church. This connection was expected but not reinforced as part of the lesson.
In summary, intentions were good but pedagogy was a problem, not so much in terms of teaching strategies but in terms of matching to student development. Nevertheless, as stated earlier the lesson was totally consistent with the scope and sequence documents and the overall intention of the RE program.

Year 3
Two Year 3 lessons were viewed. Both were consistent with scope and sequence documents. The first involved students connecting with their personal interests throughout the lesson. However, the emphasis became their personal interests at the expense of learning outcomes. Student-centred pedagogy was used effectively (pair-work and group sharing) which promoted student engagement. Students asked questions and the intellectual level of the lesson ‘stretched’ students. Nevertheless, the overall effectiveness of the lesson was compromised because the balance between content and pedagogy was problematic. Teachers were not skilled in delivering the RE content. However, as indicated earlier the lesson was totally consistent with the scope and sequence documentation.

The second lesson involved students working as a whole-class and learning about Baptism. The teacher made the lesson interesting by using personal items from home. The items were familiar to students as they would have encountered them in their everyday lives. Pedagogy took the form of story-telling with the story being acted-out as a role-play. As many students as possible were involved in the role-play even if their involvement was as a commentator. The students were engaged in the lesson and were connected to the topic because they related to the content being taught and the way it was presented. Pedagogy was student-centred and the religious education content was presented in a challenging and rigorous way.

Year 4
This was an introductory lesson that interested students because it connected to their past experiences. Students were engaged throughout the lesson because a number of unusual and diverse teaching strategies were used such as a competition, brainstorming and role-play. Consequently, students remained on task and even continued talking about the lesson after it was over. There was not a lot of intellectual engagement because it was an introductory lesson. The purpose of the lesson was to engage and interest students. The pedagogy employed achieved this purpose. The pedagogy focused on past student experiences. The lesson was consistent with scope and sequence documents.

Year 7
Students were engaged throughout the lesson because it related to them personally and because contemporary technology was used to engage students. Student engagement was achieved through the strategic use of technology. The lesson was contextualised through authentic use of Biblical and academic language to promote understanding. There was no ‘dumbing down’ of the content. Consequently, the academic rigour was high. Pedagogy involved sharing individual experiences and connecting to family life and the home. Group work interaction was used to promote understanding and
there was instant connection with content regardless of faith. Students were asked to take a hand-out home and discuss it with their parents. In other ways the lesson was presented in a traditional way. The lesson was consistent with scope and sequence documents.

Year 9
This was a highly unsuccessful lesson that demonstrated that student participation and the use of a range of teaching strategies is important for a successful lesson. Students were not connected with the lesson at all. One reason for this was that teaching strategies used were not varied. In fact, only two teaching strategies were used repeatedly. Students completed assigned tasks although they talked about other things throughout the lesson. Apart from the lack of diverse teaching strategies the lesson content lacked relevance for Year 9 students. The lesson lacked connection with students so there was lack of student engagement throughout. There was too much focus on task completion. Understanding of lesson content was hampered because the emphasis was on task completion rather than student understanding. Again, the lesson complied with scope and sequence documents.

Year 10
This lesson demonstrated that student participation, in almost any form, is important for student engagement. The pedagogy employed was very teacher-centred. Nevertheless, the skill of the teacher to engage students in discussion was such that they participated in the lesson. The purpose of the lesson was not clearly communicated to students at the beginning of the lesson. Consequently, it took students a while to ‘tune in’ to what the lesson was about. As a result, intellectual connection was delayed rather than not occurring at all. This lesson demonstrated that a lesson does not have to be perfect or even good in order to promote learning. The lesson was successful because of the rapport the teacher had with the students.

Synthesis of classroom observations
Both primary and secondary students engaged best with student-centred classroom activities. Activities needed to be relevant to student lives, encourage student participation and provide students with choices, in order to successfully promote connection and engagement with lesson objectives.

Primary school students responded best to student-centred pedagogy that included working in pairs and small groups, and was focused on student experiences. Student engagement was sustained when teachers focused on student participation such as the use of brainstorming and having each of the students share what they have learnt with the rest of the class. Relating the lesson objectives to the students personally encouraged greater engagement and intellectual learning as the students felt more connected to the content. However, it is important for teachers to note that too much focus on appealing to the student interests may negatively impact achieving actual lesson objectives.
Year 7 students engaged best with lesson objectives when technology was used and when the content of the lesson was closely related to their lives. The sharing of personal experiences as well as focusing on connections with the students’ families and home lives promoted engagement with the material and better intellectual understanding. Much like the primary school students, group work was a positive pedagogical approach which promoted connections between the students and the content of the lesson.

Year 9 students failed to successfully engage with lesson objectives where the activities lacked student participation. Students lacked connection with the subject-matter when teaching strategies were not varied. While students completed assigned tasks, the repetitive nature of the lessons prevented them from intellectually engaging with the content and they became distracted. Activities that were task intensive rather than group focused had a negative impact on student engagement, and this was further hampered by time constraints. Providing the students with choices promoted better engagement and connection with lesson content.

Teacher-directed pedagogy did not facilitate student engagement. Lessons lacking student participation were boring and did not promote intellectual engagement. Students struggled to connect to the lesson where it was not relative to them and thus their understanding was superficial and limited. Rote-learning was ineffective and focuses too much on completion of tasks rather than intellectual development.

Student-centred learning is vital for primary and secondary school students. Lesson objectives need to be relative to the students to promote engagement, and class activities need to be structured to facilitate student participation. Use of technology and group work have proven to be most effective, as well as encouraging students to personally connect with the content through the sharing of personal experiences.
Appendices

Pilot study: reliability of survey questionnaire

Background

The Lismore Diocese was selected for the pilot study which involved eight stakeholder groups that are representative of the review of religious education. The pilot survey was completed in April, 2013 and the initial findings are included in this interim report. Although the results of the pilot study are provided, the purpose of the pilot study was to assess the reliability of the survey questionnaires so that informed decisions could be made about modifications to increase instrument reliability. Eight surveys were completed by the stakeholder groups in the Lismore Diocese via the online platform Survey Monkey. Each survey instrument consisted of the same core questions. However, additional questions were added to obtain specific information from some groups while some questions were deleted for some groups as well. Overall, although each survey was tailored for each stakeholder group, they were similar.

The stakeholder groups were:

- Students in CEO schools in Years 5-8
- Students in CEO schools in Years 9-12
- Teachers
- Religious Education Coordinators
- School Principals
- Parents of current students
- Alumni
- Clergy of the Diocese

Results

Responses received from each group are summarised in Table 1. Surveys included a number of questions with Likert scaled\(^1\) or simple categorical (e.g. male vs female) responses, as well as questions requiring a short answer or descriptive response. The Likert scaled and categorical responses could be tested for reliability using traditional statistical methods to assess whether the pilot surveys elicited meaningful responses. Based on an insufficient number of responses from individuals in other groups (see Table 1), only responses from current students in Years 5-8 and 9-12 were analysed for reliability\(^2\). The Likert scaled and categorical response options are, however, almost identical across different surveys, thus findings of reliability for these three surveys indicate the questions examined would also be reliable for other groups.

\(^1\) The Likert scales used varied. However, the main scale was a five point scale: Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, Strongly Disagree.

\(^2\) Chi-square analysis (covered in the methods section) requires five or more responses for each answer (strongly agree, agree, neutral, etc). Only students responded to the pilot surveys in adequate numbers.
Table 1  The number of surveys completed online for each group surveyed in the pilot study.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Number of surveys returned</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students – Years 5-8</td>
<td>119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students – Years 9-12</td>
<td>136</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious education coordinators</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alumni</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principals</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clergy</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Analysis of pilot data– methods

The reliability of survey questions is commonly analysed by Cronbach’s alpha tests for signs of internal consistency. Internal consistency is the phenomenon wherein questions directed at similar or related issues yield similar responses. As many surveys have only one main question of interest, this can be used to identify ‘rogue’ questions that don’t seem to be directed at the question at hand. However, from the outset it was intended that a number of different questions would be explored in the surveys for this study. Thus, it was deemed that there was no capacity to eliminate questions from the survey so Cronbach’s alpha was not the best analysis tool. What was needed was a tool that indicated if responses to purposeful questions reflected real trends and were unlikely to have emerged by chance.

For each categorical and Likert scaled question a chi square analysis was conducted to examine whether the responses to the question were likely to be random or systematic. A finding that the responses were not random was taken as evidence that the question was performing in a predictable and reliable way, as it was eliciting responses that made sense and were not haphazard. The questions for which analysis was done are listed in Table 2.

Results

For all questions, the hypothesis that the questions were answered randomly was rejected (all chi square test statistics > 22.0, all p values < 0.05). Therefore, the questions reliably elicit the systematic answers that shed light on the object of the question. Table 2 features explanatory comments about the responses gained for each question. Where the wording of questions was slightly or very different for Years 5-8 and 9-12 the reliability of the survey regardless of this was evidenced by the fact that responses were always in the same direction (skewed towards agreement). On every Likert scaled question it was clear that students in Years 9-12 were more negatively biased (agree, rather than strongly agree, was the most common category). The graphs following Table 2 compare the answers given for selected questions by students in Years 5-8 and 9-12 and clearly show this effect for those on a Likert scale. Because this
effect was uniform across questions that changed and kept the same wording, it could be identified as an effect of age and Year level rather than of changes in the survey. These results suggest that surveys with slightly different wording but addressing the same objects will perform reliably for different target groups.

Table 2 Questions for which results are presented

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question no.</th>
<th>Survey – Years 5-8</th>
<th>Survey – Years 9-12</th>
<th>General comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>How often do you attend Mass with your family?</td>
<td>How often do you attend Mass with your family?</td>
<td>Responses skewed towards the negative – most students never attend Mass with family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>How often do you pray on your own in Church, at home or both?</td>
<td>How often do you pray on your own in Church, at home or both?</td>
<td>Responses skewed towards the negative – most students never pray in these settings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>How often do you pray at home with your family?</td>
<td>How often do you pray at home with your family?</td>
<td>Responses skewed towards the negative – most students never pray with family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11a</td>
<td>My school teaches all subject KLAS. There is also time for special activities like carnivals and assemblies etc.</td>
<td>My school offers an all-round education.</td>
<td>Most students react positively to this Likert scaled question, with the level of agreement expressed diminishing with year level.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11b</td>
<td>My school has a real connection between faith and life.</td>
<td>My school has a real and modern coming together of faith, culture and life.</td>
<td>Most students react positively to this Likert scaled question</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11c</td>
<td>My school makes living as a Christian real for me.</td>
<td>My school makes living as a Christian real for me.</td>
<td>Most students react positively to this Likert scaled question</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11d</td>
<td>My school celebrates Christian values by reading the Bible and participating in the Mass.</td>
<td>My school celebrates Christian values by reading the Bible and participating in the Mass.</td>
<td>Most students react positively to this Likert scaled question</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11e</td>
<td>My school helps the poor and the weak.</td>
<td>My school helps the poor and the weak.</td>
<td>Most students react positively to this Likert scaled question</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13a</td>
<td>The education at my school develops both the physical and spiritual needs of students.</td>
<td>The education at my school develops both the physical and spiritual dimensions of the staff and students.</td>
<td>Most students react positively to this Likert scaled question</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13b</td>
<td>My school helps me to know who I am.</td>
<td>The culture of my school contributes positively to the formation of the whole person.</td>
<td>Most students react positively to this Likert scaled question</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Statement</td>
<td>My school community acts as an effective place to develop my relationship with Christ.</td>
<td>Most students react positively to this Likert scaled question</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13c</td>
<td>My school brings Christ into my life.</td>
<td>My school acts as an effective place to develop my relationship with Christ.</td>
<td>Most students react positively to this Likert scaled question</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15a</td>
<td>In my school staff, students and parents show respect and care for each other by the way they treat each other.</td>
<td>My school community contributes positively to the formation of good relationships.</td>
<td>Most students react positively to this Likert scaled question</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15b</td>
<td>My school gives me opportunities to become closer to God.</td>
<td>My school community contributes positively to the religious formation of students.</td>
<td>Most students react positively to this Likert scaled question</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15c</td>
<td>My school gives me opportunities to think about the needs of others.</td>
<td>My school community helps students to look beyond themselves and consider the needs of others, including thinking about social justice.</td>
<td>Most students react positively to this Likert scaled question</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15d</td>
<td>All students in my school, whether Catholic or not are treated the same.</td>
<td>My school respects the religious freedom of its non-Catholic students.</td>
<td>Most students react positively to this Likert scaled question</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15e</td>
<td>My school proclaims the Gospel message.</td>
<td>While respecting religious freedom of non-Catholics, my school unambiguously proclaims the Gospel.</td>
<td>Most students react positively to this Likert scaled question</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15f</td>
<td>My school invites parents to religious events.</td>
<td>My school offers parents opportunities to help with the education of their children, including religious education.</td>
<td>Most students react positively to this Likert scaled question</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17a</td>
<td>In my school religious education teachers/classroom teacher show their commitment to their faith.</td>
<td>In my school religious education teachers give witness to students of their commitment to their faith.</td>
<td>Most students react positively to this Likert scaled question</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17b</td>
<td>Religious education in my school includes all parts of the Catholic faith.</td>
<td>Religious education in my school includes a comprehensive presentation of the Catholic faith.</td>
<td>Most students react positively to this Likert scaled question</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Question</td>
<td>Likert Scaled Question</td>
<td>Most students react positively to this Likert scaled question</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17c</td>
<td>Religious education in my school helps students to take part in the religious life of the Church.</td>
<td>Most students react positively to this Likert scaled question</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19a</td>
<td>Religious education teachers/classroom teachers in my school know that the Holy Trinity is important to our faith.</td>
<td>Most students react positively to this Likert scaled question</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19b</td>
<td>Religious education teachers/classroom teachers in my school place Jesus Christ at the centre of religious education.</td>
<td>Most students react positively to this Likert scaled question</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21a</td>
<td>In my school, religious education is the most important subject.</td>
<td>Most students react positively to this Likert scaled question</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21b</td>
<td>My teacher talks about religious education in other subjects.</td>
<td>Most students react positively to this Likert scaled question</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21c</td>
<td>In my school religious education is taught in an interesting way and I am involved in the lessons.</td>
<td>Most students react positively to this Likert scaled question</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21d</td>
<td>I learn about the Catholic faith in religious education.</td>
<td>Most students react positively to this Likert scaled question</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21e</td>
<td>My teacher helps all students to understand the religious education lesson.</td>
<td>Most students react positively to this Likert scaled question</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21f</td>
<td>In religious education lessons my teacher encourages the students to talk about how faith connects with our lives.</td>
<td>Most students react positively to this Likert scaled question</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21g</td>
<td>In my school religious</td>
<td>Most students react positively to this Likert scaled question</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
education is taught in a variety of ways.
My school teaches all subject ICLAs. There is also time for special activities like carnivals and assemblies etc.

My school offers an all round education.

My school has a real connection between faith and life.

My school has a real and modern coming together of faith, culture and life.
Years 5-8

Years 9-12