ST. MARY'S *Catholic High School, Dubai*

GOVERNANCE POLICY

2026-2027

ST. MARY'S *Catholic High School, Dubai*

GOVERNANCE RULES

1. INTRODUCTION

In accordance with regulatory requirements, St. Mary's Catholic High School (SMCHS) maintains a transparent governance framework to ensure the highest standards of educational quality, financial stability, and adherence to our core values. These rules are published to provide stakeholders with a clear understanding of our leadership structure.

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2. Core Functions of the Governing Body:

Strategic Leadership and Vision

Vision and Direction: Governors are responsible for setting the "North Star" for the school, defining clear goals for development and academic success.

Policy Development: They move beyond ideas into action by creating and implementing policies that ensure excellence in both teaching and student welfare.

Accountability and Oversight

Holding Others Accountable: A key role is ensuring that administrators, staff, and even fellow board members are answerable for their decisions.

Financial Guardianship: They act as the school's financial guardians, overseeing the budget and ensuring absolute transparency in how resources are managed.

Ethical Conduct: The board is expected to be the moral compass of the institution, upholding high integrity in every interaction.

Community and Growth

Stakeholder Engagement: Success is viewed as a collective effort; the board must actively listen to and involve parents, teachers, and students in the decision-making process.

Continuous Improvement: The board is committed to an ongoing cycle of advancement, ensuring the school never settles for its current level of achievement. Instead, they are tasked with constantly pushing for higher standards in academic performance, more modern facilities, and superior student support services

3. OVERALL GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE

a) The Patron: Represents the Apostolic Vicariate of Southern Arabia; provides oversight of the school's founding mission, ethical framework, and core values.

b) The Governing Board: The strategic body responsible for policy-making and financial oversight.

c) The School Leadership Team (SLT): Led by the Principal; manages daily academic operations.

d) Committees: Sub-groups that provide expert focus on Finance, Academic Standards and Safeguarding.

4. THE GOVERNING BOARD: TERMS AND MEMBERSHIP

Terms of Reference: The Governing Body's mandate is divided into three core domains of accountability.

A. Setting the strategic direction and educational targets of the school.

i. **Strategic Direction:** Developing and reviewing the school's mission, vision, values, and strategic goals, ensuring alignment with the needs of the school community and UAE educational standards.

ii. **Policy Governance:** Establishing and reviewing policies on curriculum, student welfare, and admissions.

B. Overseeing financial stability and ensuring resources are used effectively.

i. **Financial Oversight:** Overseeing the budget, financial planning, and approving major expenditures.

ii. **Performance Monitoring:** Analysing data and reports to ensure high-level accountability.

C. Ensuring the school meets its legal and regulatory obligations to the KHDA.

i. **Compliance and Safeguarding:** Ensuring the school complies with all legal requirements, safeguarding procedures, and health and safety standards.

ii. **Stakeholder Engagement:** Actively engaging with parents, students, and staff to understand their needs and seek feedback to inform governance practices.

iii. **Representation and Advocacy**: Representing the school's interests within the local community and with educational authorities to advocate for resources and policies.

Membership Composition

The SMCHS Governing Body is designed to reflect the diversity of the school community, ensuring that all stakeholders have a clear voice in decision-making processes. Beyond representation, it is a requirement that all members possess the specific skills, knowledge, and commitment necessary to fulfil their roles effectively and contribute to the continuous improvement of the school.

To achieve this balance of representation and expertise, the board is structured into two distinct tiers:

Internal Leadership Members (6)

Members represent the primary stakeholders and the day-to-day leadership of the school:

1. **The Chairperson**: Appointed by the school to lead meetings, represent the body externally, and ensure smooth functioning.
2. **The School Director**: Provides strategic alignment between school mission and financial sustainability.
3. **The School Principal:** The executive leader responsible for school operations, academic performance, and administrative accountability.
4. **The Vice-Principal**: Supports executive leadership and provides operational updates on curriculum delivery and student affairs.
5. **Parent Representative:** Appointed to represent the parent community, providing input on student welfare and academic programs.
6. **Teacher Representative:** A Senior Educator who offers insights into teaching methodologies and staff professional development.

Invited Specialist Members (6)

These independent experts are invited to provide professional oversight and strategic guidance in alignment with the UAE's multicultural and regulatory standards:

1. **Digital Transformation and IT**: Overseeing the integration of educational technology and data security.
2. **Health, Safety and Environment (HSE):** Ensuring campus compliance with UAE safety regulations.
3. **Curriculum Specialist:** Provides external moderation and oversight of the school's academic framework, ensuring alignment with international standards and KHDA requirements.

4. **Wellbeing and Mental Health:** Guiding the school's strategy on student and staff emotional welfare.
5. **Inclusion and SEND**: Providing specialist oversight for students with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities.
6. **Higher Education and Career Counselling:** Bridging the gap between secondary education and global university pathways.

5. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE GOVERNING BODY

Governors play a critical role in setting direction and overseeing the operational management of the school. Their primary responsibilities include:

1. **Strategic Direction:** Developing and reviewing the school's mission, vision, values, and strategic goals, ensuring alignment with the needs of the school community and UAE educational standards**.**
2. **Policy Governance:** Establishing and reviewing school policies on matters including curriculum, student welfare, behaviour, admissions, and recruitment, ensuring they are effectively implemented and compliant with regulations.
3. **Financial Stewardship:** Overseeing the school's budget, financial planning, and expenditure. The board monitors financial performance and approves major capital expenditures to ensure the efficient use of resources**.**
4. **Performance Monitoring:** Analysing academic data and school leader reports to monitor performance against strategic goals. Regular evaluations are conducted to identify areas for improvement and ensure high-level accountability.
5. **Stakeholder Engagement:** Actively engaging with parents, students, staff, and the wider community. The board communicates key decisions and achievements while seeking feedback to inform governance practices.
6. **Compliance and Safeguarding:** Ensuring the school complies with all legal requirements, safeguarding procedures, and health and safety standards. This includes assessing and mitigating risks to operations and reputation.
7. **Representation and Advocacy**: Representing the school's interests within the local community and with educational authorities (KHDA/MOE) to advocate for resources and policies that benefit the students.

Professional Development of the Board

To ensure the highest standards of governance, members of the Governing Body are committed to the following:

1. **Continuous Training:** Participating in training and development opportunities to enhance their knowledge and effectiveness.



2. **Knowledge Updates:** Staying informed about changes in UAE education policy, national governance benchmarks, and international best practices in school leadership.
3. **Self-Evaluation:** Conducting an annual "Governing Body Self-Review" to assess the board's impact on school improvement.

6. ASSESSING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE

To ensure that the Governing Body is adding measurable value to SMCHS, Governors conduct an annual assessment of their own effectiveness. The impact of good governance is validated through the collection of data that establishes progress toward strategic objectives.

Sources of Evidence

The Board utilizes the following evidence to demonstrate its impact on school improvement and regulatory compliance:

1. **Minutes of Meetings**: Documenting the challenge, support, and strategic decisions made by the Board.
2. **Reports from School Leaders:** Analysing the quality and transparency of information provided by the SLT to the Board.
3. **Stakeholder Feedback:** Regular surveys or focus groups capturing perceptions of the Board's effectiveness, communication, transparency, and responsiveness.
4. **Academic Performance Data:** Internal tracking showing the correlation between Board-led initiatives and student progress**.**
5. **External Attainment Data:** Results from international benchmarks (e.g., PISA, TIMSS, CAT4) and board exams.
6. **Financial Statements:** Evidence of sound financial stewardship and the effective reinvestment of resources into school facilities and staff.
7. **Key Performance Indicators:** Other indicators of school performance, including staff retention and student enrolment trends.

7. SCHEME OF DELEGATION

a) **Board Level:** Retains authority over the school's mission, budget approval, and Principal appointments.

b) **Principal Level:** Authority over student admissions, staff performance, and curriculum execution.

c) **Committee Level:** Authority to investigate specific issues and present formal recommendations to the Board.



COMMITTEES: TERMS and MEMBERSHIP

a) **Finance and Audit Committee:** Monitors the annual budget and internal financial controls.

b) **Curriculum Committee:** Monitors student attainment and KHDA inspection progress.

c) **Safeguarding Committee:** Oversees child protection and Health and Safety compliance.

d) **Membership:** Each committee must have at least one Board member and the relevant school leader.

8. APPOINTMENT PROCEDURES

a) Vacancy Identification: The Board reviews the current "Skills Matrix" to identify gaps.

b) Selection Process: Candidates are invited by the Governing Board.

c) Interview and Vetting: The Governance Committee interviews candidates to ensure alignment with school values.

d) Formal Induction: New members receive a "Governor's Policy" and sign a Code of Conduct.



9. SELECTION CRITERIA AND COMPETENCIES

General Criteria:

a) Proven commitment to the school's core values, ethical framework, and community ethos.

b) Cultural Sensitivity: A deep respect for the UAE's multicultural context, ensuring that governance decisions reflect the diversity and inclusive spirit of the nation.

c) Integrity: Ability to maintain the highest levels of confidentiality, professional integrity, and objective judgment.



Required Skillsets:

a) Strategic Leadership: Experience in organizational growth and change management.

b) Fiscal Expertise: Proficiency in analysing complex budgets and mitigating financial risk.

c) Educational Governance: Expertise in UAE school inspection frameworks and pedagogy.

10. VOTING AND DECISION-MAKING

a) **Quorum:** Meetings are only valid if 51% of the voting members are present.

b) **Consensus:** The Board strives for unanimous agreement on all major policies.

c) **Voting:** If consensus is not reached, a simple majority vote (50% + 1) will decide the motion.

d) **Chair's Vote:** In the event of a tie, the Chairperson has the casting vote.

e) **Documentation:** All decisions and voting outcomes must be recorded in the formal minutes.



Review Date :	**September 2026**
Next Review Date:	**August 2027**