

# FAQs re Newcastle Catholic Secondary Schools: Transitioning to Years 7 to 12

13 October 2022

## Overview:

The Catholic Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle is renewing its approach to secondary schooling in the heart of Newcastle to ensure it can best support the educational needs and outcomes for its students now, and as we look to the future.

We are committed to strong educational outcomes, improved student wellbeing, opportunities for staff, enhanced learning environments and accessible Catholic education.

Following the initial implementation planning and listening opportunities, an overview document has been prepared highlighting the outcomes of the consultation and next steps that will be followed. This FAQ document seeks to provide answers to some of the more common questions.

## 1. What is happening and why?

From 2024, all Catholic secondary schools in Newcastle will be commencing a staged transition to Year 7 to Year 12 schools, this includes:

- San Clemente High School, Mayfield – with the inclusion of Years 11 and 12
- St Francis Xavier’s College, Hamilton – with the inclusion of Years 7, 8, 9 and 10
- St Pius X High School, Adamstown – with the inclusion of Years 11 and 12

The transitions are staged and consider the need for additional professional development for staff and review of the current physical assets and infrastructure to accommodate these changes prior to the transition commencing.

The schools are expected to be integrated with the full complement of year groups no later than 2027.

## 2. What happens next?

Work will commence to formalise the Transition Committee along with staff to support, drive, monitor and evaluate the extensive planning details and requirements so as to ensure each school is ready to enrol each new stage of learning.

Students, families and staff will continue to be informed with updates to be shared regularly.

Parents, carers, parish members and other interested parties can also sign up to receive updates at regular milestone intervals via the website, [www.mn.catholic.edu.au/7to12SecondaryEducation](http://www.mn.catholic.edu.au/7to12SecondaryEducation).

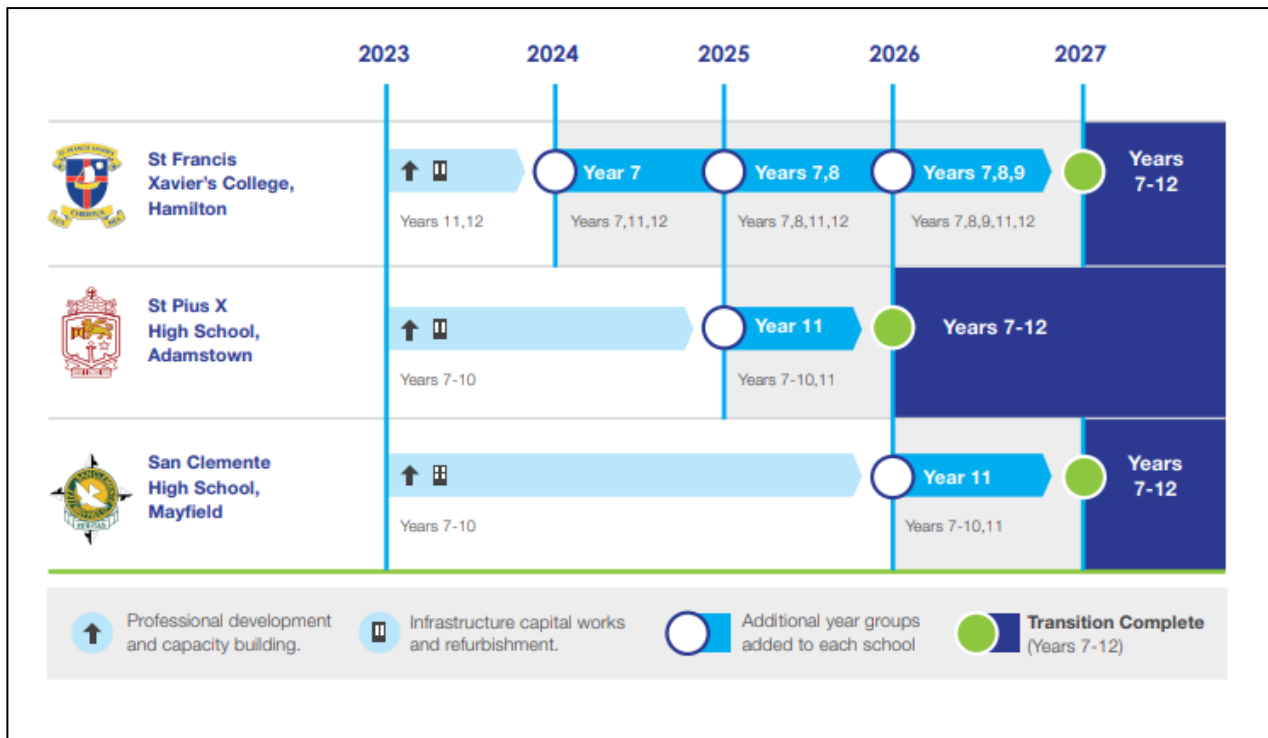
## 3. When will the new student groups commence at each school?

St Francis Xavier's College (currently Year 11 and 12 only) commences the transition with the inclusion of Year 7 in 2024, adding a further year group each year to the full Year 7 -12 complement in 2027.

St Pius X High School (currently Year 7 - 10) commences with its first Year 11 students no later than 2025, becoming a full Year 7 - 12 school in 2026

San Clemente High School (currently Years 7 - 10) commences with its first Year 11 students in 2026, becoming a Year 7 -12 school in 2027.

A table is shared below:



Individual schools transition timeframes are provided at the conclusion of this document.

#### 4. What do I do about my child's enrolment?

Enrolment positions for the 2023 school year will proceed as normal at each school. More information about enrolments in 2024 and beyond will be shared next year.

#### 5. How will the enrolment of students be decided for each school?

Catholic primary pathway schools have been assigned for each secondary school and students from these schools will generally have preference for enrolment. Notwithstanding this, all families are welcome to apply for other Catholic Secondary colleges across the Newcastle region, along with the concurrent appreciation that, in any one year, vacancies may be extremely limited.

The individual circumstances for each child will also be considered.

#### 6. What are pathway schools?

Pathway schools are the Catholic primary schools that, due to their historical parish connections and/ or geographic location, have a close educational and pastoral association with their assigned Catholic secondary college.

Students attending the assigned Catholic pathway school will generally have first preference for enrolment when applying at their pathway Catholic secondary school.

One of the intended outcomes of the work is to forge even closer educational and pastoral bonds with pathway primary schools. The experience of other school communities suggests the learning outcomes of primary-aged children, particularly with respect to experiencing a wider variety of enrichment activities, can be deepened and enhanced.

#### 7. Which Catholic primary schools are assigned as a pathway to each secondary college?

Catholic secondary school	Pathway Catholic primary schools
St Francis Xavier's College, Hamilton	Holy Family Primary School, Merewether Beach St Joseph's Primary School, Merewether St Columba's Primary School, Adamstown (option for St Pius X)
St Pius X High School, Adamstown	St James Primary School, Kotara South St John's Primary School, Lambton St Therese's Primary School, New Lambton St Columba's Primary School, Adamstown (option for St Francis Xavier's)

San Clemente High School, Mayfield	St Columban's Primary School, Mayfield Our Lady of Victories Primary School, Shortland St Patrick's Primary School, Wallsend Corpus Christi Primary School, Waratah St Peter's Primary School, Stockton, <i>(noting that dependent on residential location, students will also have a pathway to Catherine McAuley Catholic College, Medowie)</i>
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The individual circumstances for each child will also be considered.

**8. Why can't St Columba's Primary School Adamstown become a pathway school to St Francis Xavier's College Hamilton from 2024?\***

The transition of each secondary school to Year 7 – 12 considers the classroom facilities available to accommodate each new learning stage.

In 2024, St Francis Xavier's will only have the space to accommodate three Year 7 classes. This will progressively expand to four and five classes in subsequent years, to accommodate the additional applications from St Columba's Adamstown.

*\* To support the transition of St Columba's students the option of St Francis Xavier's College or St Pius X is now available from 2024.*

**9. Will siblings be able to attend the secondary school their older sibling/s attend, even if they are not attending the Catholic pathway primary school?**

Yes, if enrolment capacity is available at the secondary school, this will be considered.

The Diocesan enrolment policy recognises the importance of keeping families together wherever possible. If a student has an older sibling in a Catholic school who will concurrently be enrolled in the same calendar year when the child will be enrolled, it would be expected they would be given enrolment consideration. The individual circumstances for each child will also be considered.

**10. This transition may split my children across different schools, what can I do?**

Keeping families together, wherever possible, is a high priority. One of the additional considerations in establishing Year 7 to 12 schools is the advantage for families of having children stay together at the one school and reducing travel times throughout their secondary education. As noted above, individual circumstances will be considered and some degree of flexibility will be allowed during the initial transition process, especially with respect to siblings.

**11. What are the transport options for San Clemente from the western corridor?**

These options are currently being further reviewed. Parental feedback indicates that a dedicated bus service/s to San Clemente from the western suburbs of Newcastle would be favourable and attract considerable uptake. Further work will be undertaken to map out options.

**12. Would the transport option to San Clemente from the western corridor be provided free of charge?**

Yes. At this stage the Diocese is considering the provision of transport as a free option to ensure accessibility to a quality Catholic secondary education.

**13. Why doesn't the Diocese build a school in the western corridor instead of bussing students in?**

At this stage of demographic growth, there are not sufficient potential secondary students to immediately justify the establishment of a new secondary school.

That said, the Diocese is actively planning for the future and detailed research is being undertaken to identify prospective locations of future Catholic early childhood education centres; and primary and secondary schools in the western region of Newcastle.

**14. What professional development opportunities are there for staff?**

We recognise our people are our most important asset and look forward to supporting them transition with this change to Years 7 – 12 secondary teaching.

Notwithstanding all current staff have been trained and accredited to teach across all Secondary Stages of Learning, it was explicitly noted in the feedback that some staff would like to update their knowledge and pedagogy for the newly established student cohorts. To this end, the Catholic Schools Office is providing a substantial professional development budget to each school to ensure every teacher is supported and ready to deliver quality teaching and learning outcomes for various year groups.

**15. What will the Diocesan Lead Transition Manager and School Transition Coordinators do?**

These transitional roles reflect the commitment of the Diocese to ensure the move to a Year 7 – 12 school is both effective and sustained. As well as working closely with the secondary schools, these roles will also work closely with the Catholic Schools Office and the pathway primary schools and to drive, monitor and evaluate the extensive planning details and requirements to ensure each school is ready to enrol each new stage of learning.

## **16. Will each school have the same subject selection opportunities for Years 11 and 12?**

It is expected each school will offer a similar and comprehensive range of Stage Six (Year 11 and 12) subjects. As has been the case previously, the subject offering will be strongly influenced by student subject preferences. It is also anticipated, depending on local resources and facilities, that each school may offer some unique and specialised programs.

Extensive discussions have already taken place between the three secondary schools to identify opportunities for cross-college collaboration with respect to supporting individual students to access less popular subjects that may meet their individual interests and aspirations.

During the transition period, when the enrolment numbers in Stage Six may be smaller, additional staffing resources will be provided to ensure, wherever possible, that specialised subjects can be offered despite smaller student cohorts.

## **17. What does the 'selective academic stream' provide and how does my child access this?**

The selective academic stream is an exciting project that builds on our current gifted education program. The selective academic stream is being developed by the Catholic Schools Office to explicitly support gifted and highly accomplished students to maximise their learning potential and will be established at each of the schools at the earliest suitable opportunity.

The inner-Newcastle schools will be the 'lead colleges' in the project and the program will be designed to cater for the unique needs of highly capable students and enrich their learning outcomes in a variety of ways.

Staffed by teachers who will undertake specialised training, the program will emphasise the development of high-order thinking skills, the nurturing of creativity and the completion of integrated, project-based modules of learning that address real world problems and challenges.

Potential students for the program would normally come from Catholic pathway primary schools or other schools in the related geographic area of their designated Catholic college.

The specific selection criteria, for enrolment into the program, is yet to be determined. However, experience from other dioceses suggest that a combination of: a comprehensive '*general ability test*'; the submission of a '*portfolio of work*', highlighting specific skills and abilities of the applicant; and a '*student interview*', would all be part of the application process.

## **18. Will there be any jobs lost as a result of these changes?**

The careful enrolment modelling that underpins the transition process has been designed to maintain reasonably stable overall enrolment numbers at each school throughout the transition period.

Whilst job losses are not anticipated as a result of these changes, dependent on student subject preferences there may be an occasion where staff members with specialised subject knowledge or skills may be redeployed to another school within the inner-city network, to support students.

**19. What capital works and facility upgrades will the Diocese undertake at each school?**

The details are yet to be finalised. Each school has completed a preliminary audit identifying the key facilities required for the new learning stages and further work is required. An architectural firm will be commissioned early in term 4 to complete a Master Plan for each site.

**20. When will the Master Planning be complete for each school?**

It is expected the Master Planning will be completed by mid-2023 however, this is dependent on the appointment of architects as noted in response to Q19 above.

Refurbishment of interim work on existing facilities is expected to commence mid to late 2023.

**21. Will each school be able to accommodate Years 7 to 12?**

Yes. The existing facilities of both St Pius X and St Francis Xavier's will cater for the new learning stages. The space surrounding San Clemente is adequate in terms of size however further review of the existing, heritage-listed infrastructure is required to ensure it is able to be developed and achieve the required regulatory approvals for the site to become a contemporary and *'fit for purpose'* school. For this reason, the Diocese has planned the commencement of Year 11 at San Clemente for 2026.

**22. What happens if the Master Planning indicates you can't accommodate this change?**

All preliminary investigations suggest the planned changes at each location are both feasible and achievable, particularly as the total number of students on each site is not expected to vary significantly.

In the unlikely event major planning issues cannot be successfully resolved, the Diocese is committed to consulting with families and staff at that time. The Diocese is dedicated to the continuity of Catholic secondary education for students in the inner-city area and, if necessary, will liaise closely regarding alternative solutions.

**23. Do you expect to receive council approvals for these works?**

The Diocese recognises building approvals are not automatic and will work to achieve these in consultation with the relevant stakeholders.

As with any major building works, the Diocese will work closely with councils to ensure the necessary planning approvals are obtained. Our architects will liaise regularly with council representatives throughout the design

process to understand their requirements and incorporate them into the master planning and the formal development and building applications.

#### **24. Will the schools remain open during capital works?**

Yes. As with any capital works program, the work will be staged to ensure the safety and wellbeing of students and staff at all times. Whilst access to some areas may be temporarily restricted, a staged program of work will be developed to minimise disruption and the impact on the day-to-day operations of each school community.

#### **25. When will the capital works be completed?**

A timeline is yet to be developed, however it is anticipated the overall program of required works would require between five and eight years, so as to accommodate the necessary staging of work and minimise learning disruption. Previous experience suggests major building projects can take between three and four years to complete.

Some interim refurbishment programs would be expected to commence in mid to late 2023, continuing into 2024.

#### **26. Will the Diocesan Family Building Levy increase?**

The Diocesan Family Building Levy contributes to past, present and future building projects across existing schools along with the development of new Catholic schools in the Diocese. It is charged to the oldest child, ie once per family, and is reviewed annually in consultation with the relevant Diocesan Governing bodies, the Federation of Parents & Friends Associations, and along with consideration of the affordability of parental contributions.

As with all school systems, the Diocese has developed and budgeted for a long-term capital works plan, and it was expected during this time that each of the schools would have required a substantial refurbishment and/or building works. The current initiative may necessitate shifts in the location and timing of some proposed capital projects across the system.

#### **27. Will school uniforms change?**

Each school's Transition Committee will address any changes to the uniform in due consultation with their local community. Any potential changes to school uniforms will take into account the differing needs and stage of development of secondary school age students.



## **28. Will St Pius X adopt a new spiritual charism or change its name?**

Feedback from the St Pius X staff and family communities noted the absence of a strong Catholic charism for St Pius X. The transition to include Years 11 and 12 at St Pius X provides the opportunity to explore options to enhance the spiritual formation of the new student cohorts and potentially embrace a new spiritual charism and educational identity for the school.

The local Transition Committee will formally consider this feedback, engage with the appropriate stakeholders and seek the relevant approvals for any recommendations set forward.

## **29. Who are the Trustees of the Catholic Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle?**

The Trustees of the Roman Catholic Church for the Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle is the body corporate under civil law who hold all property as the registered proprietor, and are the proprietors of our schools under the Education Act.

Currently the Diocesan Trustees are: Rev Greg Barker (Diocesan Administrator), Rev Thomas Chirackal MST, Rev Andrew Doohan, Rev Gerard Mackie, Rev Matthew Muller, Rev Gordon Quinn and Rev Robert Searle.

## **30. Who do I contact for more information?**

Parents, carers, parish members and other interested parties can also sign up to receive updates at regular milestone intervals via the website, [www.mn.catholic.edu.au/7to12SecondaryEducation](http://www.mn.catholic.edu.au/7to12SecondaryEducation). Alternatively, the principals of each school can be contacted for more information.

## School transitions, by individual school:

