

Catholic Education – The Vision

Catholic Education takes place in communities inspired by the Spirit of Christ.

Christ's commandment to love God and neighbour inspires a caring ethos which is expressed in relationships within and beyond Catholic schools.

Catholic Education is person-centred. It promotes the dignity, self-esteem and full development of each person who is made in God's image and uniquely loved by God.

Catholic Education is inclusive. It is respectful of, and engages with people of all beliefs; it encourages the religious development of all in their own faith.

Catholic Education is rooted in the Gospel values of Respect for Life, Love, Solidarity, Truth and Justice; it aims to harmonise faith and culture, build a better society and pursue the Common Good.

Together, Catholic Schools provide high quality, rounded education for all young people, so that they develop their full uniqueness and potential.

In Catholic Schools the person and message of Christ find expression in:

- **Communities of Faith, Service, Prayer and Worship;**
- **The development of each person's full potential in a climate of joy, freedom, respect, challenge, co-operation and celebration;**
- **The enrichment of pupil life – intellectual, physical, spiritual, moral, social and emotional;**
- **The promotion of a spirit of charity, social justice, global awareness and concern for others leading to practical outreach and partnerships;**
- **A culture of tolerance where people of diverse identities are recognised, welcomed, respected and cherished;**
- **Listening, mutual understanding, trust, reconciliation, healing and peace;**
- **The preparation of pupils to lead fulfilling and purposeful lives which will contribute to the Common Good.**

Sources:

Proclaiming the Mission – The Distinctive Philosophy and Values of Catholic Education, The Catholic Bishops of Northern Ireland, (Ara Coeli, Armagh 2001);

Building Peace Shaping the Future, The Catholic Bishops of Northern Ireland, (Ara Coeli, Armagh 2001)

Life to the Full: A Vision for Catholic Education. CCMS Council for Catholic Maintained Schools. (Veritas 1996)

THE CATHOLIC SCHOOL - A STATEMENT OF AIMS

INTRODUCTION

Catholicism is a way of life inspired by the life and teaching of Christ. Living a Catholic life requires that the individual gets to know Christ as a person and tries to follow the way of life He taught by word and example.

This is a gradual process which begins in the Catholic home, where the child first learns about Christ and experiences the Christian way of life in practice.

The complex process of education is not completed in the home. Parents entrust their children to the school where they expect them to be helped to grow according to their capacity in true Christian faith and practice, (cf. Ephesians 4.13).

The local church - home, school and parish - is the believing community in which the child grows in full Christian maturity by active participation in the shared Faith, Worship and Practice of that community.

AIMS OF THE CATHOLIC SCHOOL

Hence, the Catholic School must aim to:-

1. Be complementary of the Catholic home;
2. Create the atmosphere of a believing community, committed to living out in its daily operation the Christian way of life;
3. Be characterised by concern for the individual child as someone who is helped to become more like Christ. This concern to be reflected in:
 - I. The careful selection of suitable teachers committed to the ideals of Catholic education,
 - II. The operation of a fair and equitable policy in regard to application for admission to the school,
 - III. The priorities set by the curriculum,
 - IV. The maintenance of the highest standards of education which are in keeping with the aptitudes and needs of individual pupils and which prepare them adequately for their future role in society,
 - V. The carefully structured religious education programme taught throughout the school by well informed and dedicated staff, supported by regular visits from the local clergy,
 - VI. The system of pastoral care which will exemplify fairness, compassion, tolerance and forgiveness while at the same time, setting high standards of respect, self-discipline, commitment and generosity,
 - VII. The provision of appropriate facilities for the fulfilment of the school's function,
 - VIII. Its openness to parents, parish and the wider community.

THE TEACHER IN THE CATHOLIC SCHOOL

The Church's teaching on Catholic education is contained in a variety of official statements which are summarised in the Code of Canon Law (Title III: Catholic Education).

The religious formation of the child is a gradual process and is not confined to the religion class. It is most effective when absorbed from the atmosphere of the school community.

In this, the role of the individual teacher is of paramount importance.

Hence:-

1. The teacher, like parents, teaches best by example. The teacher has the serious duty at all times to set an example in accord with Catholic beliefs and practice;

“Formation and education in a Catholic School must be based on the principles of Catholic doctrine and the teachers must be outstanding in true doctrine and uprightness of life.” (cf. Canon 803/2)

2. The teacher should strive with colleagues and the management of the school to create the community of faith which is the hallmark of the Catholic school;
3. The teacher should be seen to be committed to the Aims of the school;
4. The teacher should have concern for the total school community;
5. The teacher should maintain the highest standards of professional competence in education;
6. Parents have the primary responsibility in the education of their own children. The teacher should strive to co-operate fully with them in the delicate task of assisting the young person to grow to full stature in the community of Faith, (cf. Ephesians 4.13)

In all these matters, the Principal plays a leading role in guiding and encouraging colleagues to create an atmosphere in the school in which Catholic values can flourish.

PARENTS AND THE CATHOLIC SCHOOL

The Church's teaching on Catholic education is contained in a variety of official statements which are summarised in the Code of Canon Law (Title II: Catholic Education) which is referred to below:-

“Parents and those who take their place, have both the obligation and the right to educate their children. Catholic parents have also the duty and the right to choose those means and institutions which, in the local situation, can best promote the Catholic education of their children.” (cf. Canon 793/1)

“Parents are to send their children to those schools which will provide for their Catholic education.” (cf. Canon 798)

In choosing a particular school for their children, parents give that school their trust and support. Support does not mean an uncritical loyalty but constructive co-operation in seeing that the school realises their desire for the Christian formation of their children.

Parents have the following important responsibilities:-

1. To see that their children attend regularly;
2. To see that they respect, obey and co-operate with the teachers;
3. To encourage their children to use the school buildings and furnishings with due care, conscious that others will need these facilities after them;

4. To display, in their own attitudes and support, an appreciation of Catholic education and convey this awareness to their children;
5. To give their active support to the teachers in the work of forming mature Christians, (cf. Canon 796/2);
6. To contribute, where necessary, to the proper upkeep of the school so that it can fulfil its purpose, (cf. Canon 800/2).

THE MANAGEMENT OF THE CATHOLIC SCHOOL

The Church's teaching on Catholic education is contained in a variety of official statements which are summarised in the Code of Canon Law (Title III: Catholic Education) which is referred to below:-

“The Church has in a special way the duty and the right of educating, for it has a Divine mission of helping all to arrive at the fullness of Christian life.” (cf. Canon 794/1)

“The Church has the right to establish and to direct schools for any field of study or of any kind and grade”, (cf. Canon 800/1)