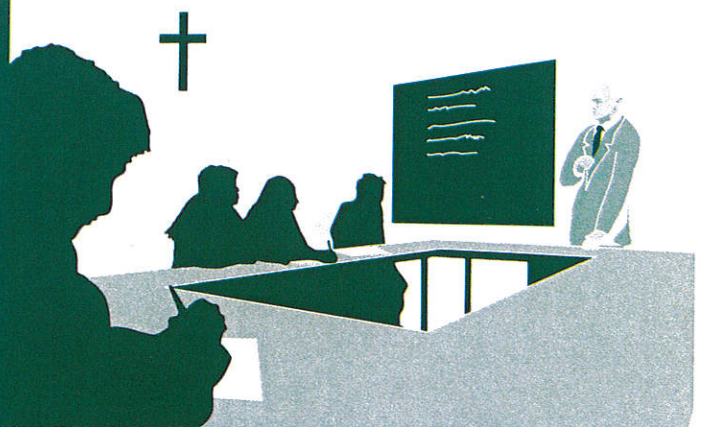


Education
in Catholic
Schools &
Colleges

Principles, Practices and Concerns

A Statement of England from The Catholic Bishops
and Wales

AUTUMN
1996



A Commitment to Education

Education is central to the mission of the Catholic Church. Since 1850, the Church's aim has been to provide a place in a Catholic school for every Catholic child.

Partnership in Education

The Catholic community works in close partnership with Central Government and Local Education Authorities in its provision of education. This partnership is enshrined in a variety of administrative and financial arrangements. Catholic schools, funded jointly by the State and the Church, make up 10% of the total maintained sector of England and Wales. Most are owned by Diocesan Trustees who appoint the majority of the governors. The latter employ all staff and have responsibility for admissions, the curriculum and related matters. The Church now has:

- 2,000 primary schools
- 450 secondary schools
- 746,000 pupils
- 35,000 teachers
- 17 sixth form colleges
- 6 colleges of higher education.

Catholic schools are an integral part of the voluntary sector. This sector, which includes Anglican, Methodist and Jewish schools, represents over 25% of state maintained provision in England and Wales. In addition, there are 190 Catholic primary and secondary schools in the independent sector. In the 22 dioceses, there are teams of officers who offer support to schools on legal, administrative and educational matters. At national level, the Catholic Education Service promotes and safeguards the interests of all those working in Catholic schools and colleges.

Parental Choice

The proportion of Catholic parents sending their children to Catholic schools has increased substantially over the last fifteen years.

There is an increasing demand for places in Catholic schools and, in a number of areas, Catholic parents are unable to secure a place for their children. Catholic schools are popular in all parts of the country.

Community Support

Catholic schools are an integral part of the Catholic community which contributes about £20 million annually towards the maintenance of and improvements to its schools' buildings and related costs.

The Distinctive Nature of Catholic Education

Whatever their status – voluntary aided, special agreement, grant maintained, special or independent – Catholic schools and colleges are established to support Catholic parents in their responsibility for the academic, physical, spiritual, moral and religious education of their children in accordance with the teachings of the Church. This means that they are committed to promoting:

The Search for Excellence

The search for excellence is seen as an integral part of the spiritual quest. Christians are called to seek perfection in all aspects of their lives. In Catholic education, pupils and students are therefore, given every opportunity to develop their talents to the full.

The Uniqueness of The Individual

Within Catholic schools and colleges, each individual is seen as made in God's image and loved by Him. All students are, therefore, valued and respected as individuals so that they may be helped to fulfil their unique role in creation.

The Education of The Whole Person

Catholic education is based on the belief that the human and the divine are inseparable. In Catholic schools and colleges, management, organisation, academic and pastoral work, prayer and worship, all aim to prepare young people for their life as Christians in the community.

The Education of All

Their belief in the value of each individual leads Catholic schools and colleges to have the duty to care for the poor and to educate those who are socially, academically, physically or emotionally disadvantaged.

Moral Principles

Catholic education aims to offer young people the experience of life in a community founded on Gospel values. In religious education in particular, the Church aims to transmit to them the Catholic faith. Both through religious education and in the general life of the school, young people are prepared to serve as witnesses to moral and spiritual values in the wider world.

Catholic Schools and The Law

From 1870, when the "dual system" of county and voluntary schools funded by the State was first established, to the Education Act of 1993 and beyond, the Catholic community has sought and won rights in law which safeguard and promote the denominational character of its maintained schools. These legal rights are central to the continuing success of Catholic education.

Key aspects of these legal rights and responsibilities relate to:

Foundation Governors

The trustees of Catholic schools have the legal right to appoint a majority of foundation governors to the governing body. This ensures that the school is managed and organised in the light of Gospel values and the teachings of the Church.

Appointment of Teachers

The governors of Catholic voluntary aided, grant maintained, special and independent schools appoint and employ their own teachers. Wherever possible, Catholic teachers are appointed in order to maintain and support the Catholic ethos of the school. 87% of primary teachers in Catholic schools and 58% of secondary teachers are Catholic.

Admissions

The governors of Catholic voluntary aided and special agreement schools are responsible for drawing up their own admissions' policy, in consultation with the Local Education Authority and grant maintained schools with the Secretary of State. This enables governors to admit pupils first and foremost on religious grounds. Almost all Catholic secondary schools are founded on comprehensive principles.

Transport

Since Catholic schools tend to recruit pupils from a wide catchment area, many children travel long distances in order to have a Catholic education. When considering the provision of transport for pupils, Local Authorities are required to take account of parents' wishes to send their children to Catholic schools on denominational grounds.

The Curriculum

The governors of Catholic maintained schools are responsible for policy relating to the secular and religious education curricula. This ensures that the whole curriculum of the school, including all subjects of the National Curriculum, is informed by and promotes Gospel values.

**The Catholic
Church and
Education
Policy:**

**Principles
and
Priorities**

The Catholic community values the ways in which its long established partnership in education with local and national government has enabled it to develop and strengthen the distinctive nature of Catholic education in England and Wales. It is committed to maintaining and improving the quality of education in Catholic schools and colleges, and seeks continuing recognition of and support for their significant contribution to state education from politicians, administrators and officers of education agencies.

In the light of its long experience, its achievements in state funded education and of its current concerns, the Catholic community will examine education policies and party manifestos in order to ensure that:

- the trustees and foundation governors of Catholic schools and colleges are enabled, through legislation, to maintain the distinctive nature of Catholic education for current and future generations of pupils and students;
- there is a place in a Catholic school for all Catholic children whose parents wish them to be educated in a denominational context;
- all schools are funded equitably at local and national levels and that collaboration between schools and colleges is not jeopardised by systems of funding;
- measures are in place to enable all pupils and students to achieve their potential and that disadvantaged children, in particular, have the necessary support to enable them to play their full part in the life of the school and the community;
- opportunities are provided, through initial teacher education and in-service development, for Catholic teachers to be trained to teach effectively in Catholic schools;
- all teachers are valued and appropriately rewarded for their service to the community and, especially, to the children they teach and their parents;
- the vocation to teaching is widely recognised and celebrated within and outside the profession.

The Quality of Catholic Education

Analysis of the data from Ofsted inspections shows that Catholic primary and secondary schools generally perform above the average at all key stages.

Of all schools inspected during the two years 1993-95, 75% of Catholic secondary schools and 73% of primary schools were judged to be good or very good overall. During the same period, half the Catholic sixth form colleges were inspected by the Further Education Funding Council. Of all the grades (1-5) awarded, between 80 – 90% of the work in the Catholic colleges was graded at 1 or 2.

Written reports illustrate some aspects of the distinctive nature of Catholic education.

"The school has a clear ethos and sense of purpose based on the Christian values explicit in the Mission Statement. Governors, staff, parents and pupils share these values and sense of purpose, and they are reflected in the overall management of the school, its standards of achievement, behaviour and relationships."

"As a community of faith, the school is particularly successful in promoting pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development."

"Many of the students have a sincere attachment to the college and an appreciation of the Christian values that infuse every aspect of its life."

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