

CATHOLIC SCHOOLS IN THE DIOCESE OF HALLAM

Position Statement: based on existing policy, revised, updated and approved by the Bishop and Trustees 20th April 2016

The Catholic Church has been a provider of education in England for centuries. The first schools in this country were established by the Church and, prior to the Reformation, it was the only provider of schools in England.

Following the re-establishment of Catholic Bishops in England in 1850, Cardinal Manning, the then Archbishop of Westminster, encouraged Catholics to build 'schools before churches'. Catholic schools were built across England from that time on.

Our Diocesan schools were founded by, and are part of, the Catholic Church. The schools are to be conducted as Catholic schools in accordance with Canon Law and the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church and in accordance with the Trust Deed of the Diocese of Hallam.

The following applies to all Catholic schools of the Diocese of Hallam but variations of some sections will need to be agreed for Joint Schools.

A Vision for Our Schools

Our schools will

- Be part of the Church's religious mission
- Assist parents to fulfil their responsibilities
- Serve the local Church
- Provide for the common good of society

To do this they will

- Seek to work collaboratively with other schools, local parishes and the Diocese for mutual benefit
- Share good practice, including in teaching and learning
- Share leadership expertise
- Develop future leaders

for the benefit of all children.

In attempting to achieve this vision it is important to note:

- The radical re-engineering of the school system with considerably greater autonomy for individual schools. Diocesan schools have been converting to Catholic Voluntary Academy status to ensure long term protection of their religious character. Policy changes from central government necessitated that the diocesan programme of academisation be paused whilst clarity was sought regarding a number of very important matters. Discussions have taken place with the CES, the DFE and the Regional Schools Commissioner (RSC) and we believe that these matters have now been resolved.
- Standards of both achievement and progress in all of our secondary schools are rated good or outstanding. GCSE results in some schools showed a decline in 2015. Standards of achievement and progress in our primary schools are now largely good or better following significant improvement in the last three years. It will be important to maintain the systems which are assisting improvement in our schools;

- The quality of the Catholic life of our schools and Religious Education are almost invariably good or better. However, continued support will be necessary to maintain standards and promote further improvement;
- Schools will continue to need advice, support and guidance in areas such as governance, admissions, personnel matters, complaints, etc.
- The long term success of Diocesan schools and the provision of good quality Catholic education will not be assured without a continuing supply of effective school leaders. The identification and development of potential Catholic leaders must remain a priority for the Diocese.

Central to Diocesan policy is the commitment of all schools applying for Catholic Voluntary Academy status to the ten principles designed to protect the Catholic character of our schools.

1. Diocesan schools, whether academy or voluntary aided status, will continue to be members of the diocesan family of schools and will not be left to work in isolation
2. All diocesan schools will continue to work for the Common Good and promote Community Cohesion
3. The Headteacher and any member of staff appointed to deputise for the Headteacher in a diocesan Catholic school must be a practising Catholic as determined by the Bishops' Conference Memorandum of Appointment
4. Religious Education must be taught
 - I. In line with the Curriculum Directory and any directive given by the Bishop with regard to specific programmes of study
 - II. In line with the Bishops' Conference which specifies 10% of curriculum time requirement in Key Stages 1-4 and 5% in Key Stage 5
5. Religious Worship will be in accordance with the rites, practices, disciplines and liturgical norms of the Catholic Church.
6. Personal Health and Social Education and in particular, Sex and Relationship Education must be taught in line with guidance from the Bishops' Conference and in accordance with the teaching of the Catholic Church.
7. Foundation Governors must be in the majority of at least two. The Chair of Governors must be a Foundation Governor.
8. Diocesan schools will be led, managed and governed according to the Social Teaching of the Catholic Church. They will express a preferential option for the poor and disadvantaged, particularly those with Special Needs and those in Public Care.
9. Governors and staff will ensure that priority is given to promoting good relationships with the homes and parishes of the children.
10. All diocesan schools will be obliged to work collaboratively with diocesan and local families of schools.

Whilst our Voluntary Aided schools are not required to formally sign up to the ten principles we are aware that the principles receive the support of headteachers and governors as the areas covered are fundamental to the religious character of all our schools. As a Diocese we have continually stressed our strong commitment to supporting all of our schools, irrespective of their legal status. This is vital at a time when the organisation of provision of education for school age children is in transition because of national policies. From a Diocesan prospective, it is essential that we build an even stronger relationship between our schools, hence the emphasis on families of schools. This confirms our vision of community and also our commitment that our strong schools will support those schools experiencing difficulties.

Catholic maintained schools were until 2010, almost without exception voluntary aided schools provided jointly by the Catholic Church and the state. Usually, the school buildings and the land upon which the schools are built are held in a trust managed by the Catholic Church. The day to day running costs of the schools are paid for by the state.

There are 20 Dioceses with schools in England, each of which has its own Bishop or Archbishop. Canon Law provides that the Diocesan Bishop has the right to watch over and inspect the Catholic schools situated in his territory. He also has the right to issue directives concerning the general regulation of Catholic schools (Canon 806§1¹).

The Bishop or Archbishop holds Canonical responsibility for the provision of all Catholic education within his diocese. His oversight is to ensure that the Catholic life of the school is being upheld. The Bishop's canonical responsibilities are normally carried out by the Diocesan Schools' Commission, in our case the Diocesan Schools' Department on his behalf. The rights of the Diocesan Bishops are recognised in statute, including the right to carry out S48 inspections (which take place in addition to S5 inspections). A grant towards the cost of these inspections in both maintained schools and academies is provided by the state.

In Catholic VA schools, the Bishop's oversight is exercised through his Diocesan Schools' Department in close partnership with the local authorities. This recognises that in VA schools, it is the local authority which holds the statutory responsibility for monitoring effectiveness and intervention, and to inform the Diocese when a school gives cause for concern. In Catholic Voluntary Academies, the Bishop's oversight is exercised through his Diocesan Schools' Department. This recognises that it is the statutory responsibility of the Governing Body and the Headteacher to monitor standards and that diocesan reports are provided to complement this process.

As an integral part of its educational vision for the holistic formation of children and young people, the Catholic Church expects its schools and academies to promote and uphold high academic standards.

There is an expectation that the culture of a Catholic school will be rooted in the person and teaching of Christ.

It is because of this that we believe that in order to provide a holistic or complete education we must include the spiritual and we provide our children with a religious education and a school culture/ethos to enable them to become complete human beings.

Cardinal Basil Hume said:

"disputes over the purposes of education reflect a much wider conflict in our society over what it is to be human. We are in fact in a battle ground of competing ideologies, fighting for the minds and imaginations of the young, offering rival views of human fulfilment and happiness".

We know that in our schools staff work hard to demonstrate the importance of the dignity of the human person, the sanctity of human life, the centrality of the family as the basic unit of society, the importance of our relationships with others, both those we know and those we haven't yet met and the vital importance of living in community and being community. We offer an education based on a

¹ ¹Canon Law is the ecclesiastical law which all Catholics are expected to follow. In relation to education, Canon 806§2 states that 'Directors of Catholic Schools are to take care under the watchfulness of the local ordinary [Bishop] that the instruction which is given in them is at least as academically distinguished as that in the other schools of the area.'

philosophy in which faith, culture and contemporary life are brought together in harmony. It is an education based on an overall religious perspective of human life and purpose.

However, we know that there are those who have a different view of the human condition. We are aware of the dramatic rise in recent times in what the Pope Benedict described on his visit to the UK as ‘Secular Fundamentalism’.

There is clear evidence that our schools have made a significant contribution to community cohesion, make a clear commitment to the Common Good and are known to promote tolerance and diversity and living in harmony whilst respecting the views of others. You will also be aware that in recent times schools have been established which do not share some or any of these characteristics. These schools are faith schools but without the history and tradition of Christian Church schools in this country with their recognised, documented contribution to the good of all. Some of the people who would seek to close Church schools are using the term ‘faith schools’ to describe both the more recently established schools and the long established Church schools in this country.

According to Dr Andrew Morris, some of the objections to Catholic/Church schools are quite extreme. For example, “religion is harmful to individuals”, will be seen to be extreme by the majority of the population. However, there are some objections to Church schools which we need to be prepared to discuss and debate and about which we need to be prepared to provide evidence to support our position. These objections include:

- i Church schools erode social cohesion/promote dis-harmony;
- ii they are divisive not inclusive;
- iii they limit the personal autonomy of pupils;
- iv they damage other schools by their Admission Policies;
- v they are discriminatory, denying social justice to non-Catholics;
- vi they enjoy unjustified preferential financial support.

These objections will be rejected by those of Christian Faith. However, we need to provide the evidence to show open-minded people that Church schools do not warrant such objections. Ofsted has done us a huge favour by providing an evidence bank on which to counter many of these criticisms. For example, Ofsted has found and reported in official documents that Catholic schools contribute more to community cohesion than schools in general.

Perhaps it is also worth bearing in mind when arguing the case for the existence of Church schools, that there is a clear legal basis for this. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights includes two articles which are of supreme importance to those who value our Catholic schools:

Article 16 (3) “the family is the natural and fundamental group unit of society”.

Article 26 (3) “parents have the prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children”.

Also, it is worth remembering that the European Convention on Human Rights states: “the State shall respect the right of parents to ensure such education and teaching is in conformity with their own religious and philosophical convictions”.

First protocol – Article 2.

It is our responsibility to take every opportunity to communicate why our schools exist and to proclaim the good that they do.

Repositioning the Catholic school

In continually repositioning our schools within a changing society it is important to know what we are repositioning, what we are proclaiming, who and what we are. We need to:

- have a sense of the historical context of Catholic education;
- have an understanding of why the Church provides schools;
- understand the nature and purpose of Catholic schools in our country;
- recognise the benefits of diversity of educational provision;
- be aware of the legal context of parental rights and responsibilities within the current legal context for Catholic schools;
- understand the evidence which demonstrates the contribution by Catholic schools to the common good and recognise the challenges that we are facing.

It is interesting to look at the size of the Catholic school population in this country. In 1974 there were just under one million Catholic children in our Catholic schools. In 2007, there were just over half a million Catholic children in our Catholic schools, although over $\frac{3}{4}$ of a million children attend our schools. Approximately, 10% of the child population currently attend a Catholic school. This is a significant part of the school sector.

1. *Do we want to work in partnership and in collaborations or in splendid isolation?*
2. *Should we be collaborating more fully with our family of schools?*
3. *Is there an opportunity within our professional relationships to share leadership/expertise/facilities?*
4. *Can we provide mutual support, shared curriculum development, joint training?*
5. *Can we use this opportunity of a radical shake-up of the educational system to both improve our effectiveness as educators and improve our effectiveness as Church?*

We need to ask ourselves “What do we think the education system will look like in 2020?” What we do know is that the Catholic sector must adapt to thrive and not just survive. We need to consider the role that our schools can play within our Church communities and within our wider communities.

As suggested earlier, recent developments mean that it is imperative that we examine the opportunities for working in partnership. Partnerships between schools are a common theme with the DfE, the National College, Local Authorities and Dioceses. For many years well informed observers have been telling us that the future of school improvement lies in school-to-school partnerships. The evaluation of the work that has been undertaken recently in school improvement demonstrates that the most effective model for improving schools is a model where schools work collaboratively. There are differing strong views about the nature of the relationship which should exist between schools. It surely means for us that schools must work as equal partners and that the supporting schools must do everything within their power to ensure that the self-respect and the dignity of the staff working in the school being supported are not only preserved but are enhanced. **If the culture of our schools is rooted in the person and teaching of Christ so must be the work of our school leaders.**

The Partnerships and collaborations which we need to contemplate will inevitably develop between Catholic schools and between Catholic and other Church schools and with Community schools and Independent schools. They will take a variety of forms and there will be no particular blue-print.

We must also consider that for the leaders of our Diocesan schools the opportunities which exist for some leaders in terms of system leadership. The DfE and the National College are both looking to Headteachers to provide leadership across the educational system. Opportunities for growing System Leadership exist within Trusts, in models of Executive Headship and in opportunities to serve

as National Leaders of Education and Local Leaders of Education. We all have a responsibility to develop models of schooling which facilitate the sharing of good practice in the interests of all children so that all children have the opportunity of a good education.

So what does it mean for those who seek to strengthen families of schools within our Diocese?

- 1 We need to ensure that we are sufficiently well informed to be able to counter the unjust criticism from the secular fundamentalists. If we don't defend ourselves, who will?
- 2 We need to ensure the continuation of our sector as a major force in community cohesion in achieving the common good. What structures, system, status best ensures that?
- 3 We need to be prepared to support one another in good and bad times. The only support which may be available in future may come from schools with whom we have or need to develop a partnership or collaboration. Are all schools open to requests for partnership and support within existing families?
- 4 We have a vital role in developing the school leaders of our Catholic and Catholic and Church of England schools for the future. If we don't develop the leaders no one else will. We need to ask ourselves what we are doing in terms of the style of leadership we are encouraging in our schools. The style of leadership of the headteacher is a major influence on other staff.
- 5 Finally, we must work with the young on behalf of the Church. We need to continue providing Catholic and Catholic / Church of England teaching and we need to provide role models in the Christian life to undertake as lay people some of the most important work in the Church. The Church is depending on us.

There is the opportunity for us as a Diocese to take steps to improve the quality of our schools and to strengthen the family of schools model within the Diocese by using changes to the structure and system of schooling to give further emphasis to that which is most important to us. We will achieve this by:

- Maintaining the ten principles
- Renewing our commitment to the family of schools model
- Ensuring every child in a Diocesan school receives an education which is at least 'Good'
- Developing leaders for our Diocesan schools
- Adapting to national and local requirements whilst maintaining all that is so precious at the heart of Catholic education

Jim Conway & John Cape

Directors of Schools

April 2016