Catholic Education in England and Wales



Promoting and Supporting Catholic Education in England and Wales



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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 in England and in Wales, and with Local 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 governors. The governing bodies employ all staff and have the responsibility for admissions and the curriculum. The Church now has:

- 1,811 Primary Schools
- 377 Secondary Schools
- 49 All-age Schools
- 798,687 Pupils
- 48,234 Teachers
- 15 Sixth Form Colleges
- 4 Universities
- 13 University Colleges and Higher Education Institutions

Catholic schools are an integral part of the voluntary sector. This sector, which includes Anglican, Methodist and Jewish Schools as well as a few others, represents about one-third of state funded provision in England and Wales. In the 22 dioceses, there are teams of officers who offer support to schools on legal, administrative and educational matters while the Catholic Education Service works at a national level to promote and safeguard the interests of Catholic education and those working in Catholic schools and colleges.





Parental Choice

Catholic schools contribute to the diversity of educational provision which allows parents a genuine choice of schools which will educate their children in accordance with their religious and philosophical convictions. Catholic schools are popular with parents and in many parts of the country there is an increasing demand for places which, in some areas, the Church is struggling to meet.

Community Support

Catholic schools are an integral part of the Catholic community, which contributes funding and the use of assets worth many millions of pounds annually to enable Catholic schools to operate as part of the state funded sector as a contribution towards the common good of society.

The Distinctive Nature of Catholic Education

Whatever their status- Voluntary Aided, Academy, Non-Maintained Special, Sixth-Form College 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. Catholic education endeavours to make the person of Jesus Christ known and loved, and to place Him and the teachings of the Catholic Church at the centre of the educational enterprise. In placing 'Christ at the Centre'[1], Catholic education seeks to invite all into a life of discipleship within the Body of the Church. This means that Catholic Schools are committed to promoting:

1. Christ at the Centre, Catholic Truth Society, 2nd Edition, 2012

The Search for Excellence

Christians are called to fulfil their potential and strive for excellence in all aspects of their lives. Catholic education therefore strives to offer students every opportunity to develop their talents to the full through their academic work, spiritual worship and extracurricular activities.

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 valued and respected as individuals so that they may be helped to fulfil their unique role in creation. It is important therefore that we provide high quality pastoral care throughout our schools and colleges in order to support the individual needs of each student.

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. Service to those who are amongst the most disadvantaged in our society has always been central to the mission of Catholic education.

Moral Principles

Catholic education aims to offer young people the experience of life in a community founded on the Christian virtues. 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, through to the Academies Act of 2010 and beyond, the Catholic community has sought and won rights in law which safeguard and promote the denominational character of its state funded 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 Christian virtues and the teachings of the Church.

Appointment of Teachers

The governing bodies of Catholic schools and academies appoint and employ their own teachers and other staff. Wherever possible, Catholic teachers are appointed in order to maintain and support the Catholic ethos of the school. 69% of primary teachers in Catholic schools in England and 44.2% of secondary teachers are Catholic. In Wales, 76% of primary teachers and 38% of secondary teachers are Catholic.

Admissions

In line with the Catholic community's commitment to making Catholic education available for every Catholic child, Catholic schools are provided primarily to assist parents in educating their children in the Catholic faith. In order to ensure this, the governing body in a Catholic school is the Admission Authority, responsible for drawing up its own admissions policy within the parameters set by the diocesan bishop. This enables Catholic schools to admit pupils first and foremost on religious grounds; giving priority to Catholic children.

However, Catholic schools are not exclusive to Catholic pupils, and are based on inclusive Christian principles. Where there are sufficient places, Catholic schools also welcome other pupils. Currently, 29.8% of pupils in Catholic schools and colleges in England are of other denominations and faiths or none. This figure is higher in Wales where it is 42% of pupils.

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 parents' wishes to send their children to Catholic schools on denominational grounds.

The Curriculum

The governing body 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 Catholic teachings under the supervision of the local bishop.

The Catholic Church and Education Policy

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 continue to 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 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 and Diversity of Catholic Education

Analysis of Ofsted data statistics from the Department for Education shows that Catholic schools and academies generally have more diverse populations than other schools and outperform the national average in exam results.

At age 11, Catholic schools in England outperform the national average English and Maths SATs scores by 5%. This is echoed in GCSE results, where Catholic schools also outperform the national average by 5%. As well as this, 82% of Catholic primary schools and academies have Ofsted grades of good or outstanding. This is in comparison to a national average of 79% .[2]

A significantly higher proportion of pupils in Catholic schools in England are from the most deprived areas. 18.4% of pupils at Catholic maintained primary schools live in the most deprived areas compared with 13.8% nationally. 17.3% of pupils at Catholic maintained secondary schools live in the most deprived areas compared with 12.2% nationally. [3]

Catholic schools in England have a greater proportion of pupils from ethnic minorities. 34.5% of pupils in Catholic maintained primary schools are from ethnic minority backgrounds compared with 28.5% nationally. 30.2% of pupils in Catholic maintained secondary schools are from ethnic minority backgrounds compared with 24.2% nationally.

In Wales the national census reported that the proportion of pupils of minority ethnic origin in primary schools was 9.3% and 7.5% in secondary schools. Catholic schools are much more ethnically diverse with higher proportions in most ethnic categories. 24% of pupils from Catholic primary schools are of minority ethnic origin. This figure stands at 17.5% for Catholic secondary schools.

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2. This information is taken from the Ofsted 2013 quarterly releases of official statistics and the Department for Education England statistics. These statistics are not available for Wales.

3. These statistics are taken from IDACI data for England and are not available for Wales.



This document has been revised and approved by the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales
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