

Stephanie MacGillivray

Parliamentary Officer at the Catholic Education Service

My name is Steph and I am the Parliamentary Officer for the Catholic Education Service (CES). I have worked here since October 2014 as part of the Bishops' Conference Parliamentary and Public Policy internship which lasts for a year. I live in Chorleywood with my mum and twin brother.



Tell us a bit about your current work

Life is never dull at the Catholic Education Service! I do a really varied range of work from public affairs to project management to meeting MPs in Parliament. I have organised and put together resources for Education Sunday 2015, and more recently have been working on educational resources for schools to use in the run up to this year's general election.

What inspired/motivated/attracted you to get to your current position?

From a young age I have always had a keen sense of social awareness and have wanted to effect positive change in the world around me. At university I found it inspiring to see how politically and socially engaged and aware many of my fellow students were, and I listened to the radio a lot to keep up to date with current affair – which me and my friends would then debate and discuss over many a late-night coffee in between essay writing! I began to realise the responsibility and power that came with a life in political work, and I started to really consciously think about my Christian values and how I could incorporate them into my daily life.

Are there any political or social issues you feel passionately about?

I strongly believe in the power that a good education can and should give every single child. School is such an exciting place for children of all ages, but I also believe that learning isn't just for children. As adults we need to also acknowledge our fallibility and learn from the mistakes we make so that we can continue to do good work and help others. We should not think that we know everything just because we are "grown-ups" – learning is something we do every single day!

Tell us about someone you have always admired?

It may be cliché but I have always looked up to my mother. She instilled Christian values in our home from day one, and I am always learning from her good example – whether it was nursing her father who had multiple sclerosis, her campaigning for the end of Apartheid in South Africa during her student days, or her enduring patience when we were (and occasionally still are) unreasonable...! Perhaps the most important thing I have learned from her is the knowledge that "God wouldn't give us a problem he knew we couldn't handle it" – handy advice when you think you're having a bad day!

Do you think faith and public life/politics are compatible?

Absolutely. I think that faith can play an influential and informative role during important decision making processes. Values and moral action are vital in public life, and faith can be a helpful guide for a figure in public or political life.

What are the most important things you have learnt from your work and has anything surprised you?

It is difficult to choose – I truly feel that I learn something new every day here at the CES. One of the things I have most enjoyed has been getting to know what political life is **really** like. I have been so pleasantly surprised by the dedication and commitment of Catholics working in public life, especially the MPs I have met. A couple of years ago I never would have seen myself doing this work, but I think I have also surprised myself. I love my job and I look forward to going into work every day.

What words of wisdom/advice would you give to students?

I'm not sure about wisdom but I always advise people to keep an open mind. There are so many options out there, that when God puts something your way, don't just ignore it because you think you're not interested or "not good enough". If you aim high and work hard, you can achieve anything!