

**C·E·S**

**CATHOLIC EDUCATION SERVICE**

The Education Agency of the Bishops' Conference of England & Wales



**Home-School Agreements**

**GUIDANCE FOR GOVERNORS  
OF CATHOLIC SCHOOLS**

*1999*

## **Introduction**

Among a number of the new duties imposed upon all schools including Catholic schools, brought about as a result of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 is the requirement that "Home-School" Agreements be put in place by September 1999.

Herein, we set out both guidance and model examples which we trust will be of assistance to headteachers and governors. We acknowledge, with gratitude, the Schools Commissions of the Archdiocese of Birmingham and the Diocese of Hallam who were jointly responsible for much of the content of this publication.

It should be noted that forthcoming School Government Regulations will include, among a number of Governing Body functions which may not be delegated either to an individual or to a committee of the Governing Body, the responsibility for preparing and adopting Home-School Agreements. In other words, the preparation and adoption of the same should be made by a quorate meeting of the Governing Body.

Finally, Governing Bodies are reminded that the Home-School Agreements should be reviewed annually and in the light of experience may be suitably amended.

**Michael Power**

May 1999

# GUIDANCE FOR GOVERNORS REGARDING HOME-SCHOOL AGREEMENTS

## **Introduction:**

This document outlines the requirements, gives guidance on Home-School Agreements, suggests what should be included in a Catholic school and offers some model example for adoption or adaptation by governors.

## **The Legal Requirement:**

Governing bodies are required by Section 110 and 111 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998, to adopt a Home-School Agreement for their school by September 1999 together with a parental declaration to be used in connection with the Agreement.

The Home-School Agreement is a statement which specifies:

- a) the school's aims and values
- b) the school's educational responsibilities (what it will provide)
- c) the parental responsibilities (what they are expected to do to help)
- d) the school's expectations of its pupils.

In addition to the Agreement, governing bodies are required to adopt a parental declaration to be used for recording that parents of pupils who have been admitted to the school:

- a) take note of the school's aims and values
- b) take note of the school's responsibilities
- c) acknowledge their responsibilities as parents
- d) acknowledge the school's expectation of the pupils' conduct.

Governing bodies **must** take reasonable steps to ensure that the declaration is signed by parents unless the governing bodies consider it inappropriate to do so.

Governing bodies **may** invite pupils to sign the declaration.

Governing bodies **should** review the Agreement from time to time and in so doing must consult all parents (and others).

Governing bodies must not:

- have the declaration signed before the child is admitted to school;
- make the signing of the declaration a condition of admission;
- make a decision about admission based on the likelihood of parental signature;
- exclude any pupil from the school or impose any adverse consequences on account of any failure to sign the declaration;
- take any legal action against any parents for any breaks in the Agreement.

**The Characteristics of Home-School Agreements in Catholic Schools should reflect that:**

- each Catholic school in the diocese, in partnership with home and parish, has been established to be an integral part of the local Catholic community which shares the mission of the Church to proclaim The Gospel of Jesus Christ;
- the new ethos statement in the Instrument of Government, states that at all times the school is to serve as a witness to the Catholic faith in Our Lord Jesus Christ;
- the purpose of Catholic education is to bring to fulfilment the wholeness created in each one of us by God. This human wholeness has been redeemed for us through the incarnation, life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ;
- all learning in a Catholic school is a call to service of others in the search for a Kingdom of love and salvation;
- Catholics believe that parents are the primary educators of their children, No school can fully compensate for what parents neglect but all schools can enrich what parents achieve. Our commitment at baptism is to support the parents in their task. The parent asks the teacher to be a partner and not vice-versa;
- teaching is a vocation and that teachers are not simply people who transmit knowledge, mark books, discipline behaviour, test outcomes, record and compare results. We believe teachers are educators who help to bring young people to human wholeness by enthusiasm, values and beliefs, as well as skills;
- we believe that Agreements are not solely a list of “do’s” and “don’ts” intended to clarify where the blame lies when problems arise. We note this danger as some see education as becoming more secular, functional and mechanistic. Rules that do not bend a little in schools, where reconciliation is not experienced, are of little value to children.

Thus the Home-School Agreement is a further opportunity to build Kingdom values and to spell out the school's Catholic nature to parents. A good Home-School Agreement from a Catholic school will therefore be radically different to examples given in the DfEE guidance.

**Parental Responsibilities in a Catholic School's Home-School Agreement might usefully include some of the following statements:**

I/We will try to:-

- ensure that my child attends school regularly, on time and suitably equipped;
- inform the school of any concerns or problems that might affect my child's work or behaviour;
- support the Christian values of the school community;
- give my child opportunities for home learning and support homework from school;
- support the school's policies and guidelines for behaviour;
- attend parent evenings and discussions about my child's progress;
- encourage my child to be enthusiastic about learning and to enjoy school;
- encourage my child to show kindness and consideration to others;
- talk to my child about their experiences in school and encourage them to do their best;
- attempt to support the Catholic community and the school governors in their responsibilities for maintaining the school buildings in good repair.

**The Catholic school's educational responsibilities might usefully include some of the following statements:**

The school will:-

- provide a friendly welcome to your child and a secure, stimulating, Christian environment in which to learn;
- ensure that your child is valued for who he/she is and helped to make good progress in their spiritual, moral, emotional and academic development;

- treat your child with the dignity and respect they require, encouraging them to their full human wholeness;
- demonstrate our faith and our school's foundation in the teaching of Jesus Christ, by what we teach and the way we live and worship in our school;
- do our utmost to provide the best possible education we can for your child and enthusiastic teaching rooted in our beliefs, our values and our skills;
- provide you with information about your child's progress and provide you with opportunities to talk to teachers;
- keep you well informed about school policies and activities through regular letters and newsletters;
- set, mark and monitor homework suitable for your child's needs;
- send home an annual report of your child's progress;
- contact you if there is a problem with your child's attendance or punctuality;
- inform you of any concerns regarding your child's behaviour, work or health;
- we will challenge your child to strive for the highest standard of personal, social and intellectual development and aim for excellence in all they do.

**The Catholic school's expectation of the pupil might usefully include some of the following statements:- (dependent on age)**

I will try to:-

- attend school regularly and on time;
- wear the school uniform and bring all the equipment I need every day;
- take care of all school equipment and help keep our school free from litter;
- learn something new each lesson and always do my best;
- share my feelings honestly and politely and show consideration for others in school;
- behave sensibly so as to keep us all happy and safe as we learn;
- try to think for myself and take responsibility for my actions;
- observe all school rules and treat everyone with the respect they deserve.

## The Process

The Home-School Agreement in a Catholic school should be recognised as an integral part of the home/school/parish partnership.

Many schools have now devised policies for Partnership;

Eg:

We believe that parents are the first and foremost educators of their children and that we are called to support them in their God given task.

We believe that this school, rooted in the mission of the Eucharistic Community of ..... has a particular responsibility to support parents in their task of nurturing their children in faith, love and human growth. Our Home-School Agreement recognises this belief.

We believe that through our school we enable our parishioners to experience a vibrant, Christian community whereby we as parish engage with the world and offer an experience of The Gospel to all who have contact with us.

To achieve this we will reflect annually on our practice, celebrate and consolidate our successes and realistically explore ways of journeying more closely together.

It may be appropriate when considering developing a Home-School Agreement that a small working party of governors, parents and teachers be formed to produce a draft document.

All parents should have the opportunity to comment on the draft Agreement and to be involved in the process if at all possible.

Wherever possible, pupils should be involved in drawing up the Agreement.

Parishioners too should be made aware of Home School Agreements and be encouraged to support the work of the school(s) as part of the mission of their parish.

## **Suggested Timeline for the Development and Implementation of the Home-School Agreement for Catholic Schools**

*A working party of teachers, governors and parents or a governors committee should produce a Home-School Agreement using the available guidance before the end of **May**.*

*This should be circulated with a covering letter to all parents and interested parties e.g. governors, staff, pupils and PTA. It is suggested that the consultation period should be at least ten days and that returns should be made by the end of **June**.*

*The Committee or working party considers all the responses and decides whether it wishes to make any amendments to the draft. Arrangements for distribution and the signing of the Agreement should be finalised by **July**.*

*Ideally, by the end of the summer term schools should have reached this stage but please be realistic. Unrealistic legislation needs to be kept in perspective with other demands.*

*The Home-School Agreement should be sent to parents and carers with an invitation for them to sign the parental declaration in **September**.*

*The governing body will need to formally ratify the Home-School Agreement at a full governors meeting in the Autumn Term.*

Appendices One and Two are offered as models for consideration or adaptation.

It is suggested that the signed Agreement be held in the pupil's own record file and referred to when appropriate by parent, teacher or child.

## **PUPIL RESPONSIBILITIES:-** (Key Stage 2 onwards)

I acknowledge the different and unique talents which God has given me and my responsibility to use them wisely.

**Therefore I will try to:-**

- attend school regularly and on time;
- wear the school uniform and bring all the equipment I need every day;
- take care of all school equipment and help keep our school free from litter;
- learn something new each lesson and always do my best;
- share my feelings honestly and politely and show consideration for others in school;
- behave sensibly so we can be happy and safe as we learn;
- try to think for myself and take responsibility for my actions;
- observe all school rules and treat everyone with the respect they deserve.

Signed .....  
(Pupil)

## **Model Home-School Agreement for Consideration**

### **HOME-SCHOOL AGREEMENT**

#### **Our School Mission Statement:**

The community of ..... Catholic School at all times and in all that it does, attempts to serve as a witness to the Catholic faith in Our Lord Jesus Christ.

We believe that parents are the first and foremost educators of their children and that we are called to support them in their God given task. Each child in our school is valued and encouraged to achieve human wholeness – spiritually, morally, emotionally and academically in a happy, secure Christian environment.

We will always do our best to provide the best possible education for every child.

Signed .....  
(For and on behalf of the Governing Body)

## PARENTAL RESPONSIBILITIES:-

We acknowledge that we as parents are the primary educators of our children and have an irreplaceable role to play in supporting our children's learning at school.

### Therefore I/we will try to:-

- ensure that my child attends school regularly, on time and suitably equipped;
- inform the school of any concerns or problems that might affect my child's work or behaviour;
- support the Christian values of the school community;
- give my child opportunities for home learning and support homework from school;
- support the school's policies and guidelines for behaviour;
- attend parents evenings and discussions about my child's progress;
- encourage my child to be enthusiastic about learning and to enjoy school;
- encourage my child to show kindness and consideration to others;
- talk to my child about their experiences in school and encourage them to do their best;
- attempt to support the Catholic community and the school governors in their responsibilities for maintaining the school buildings in good repair.

Signed .....  
(Parent/Guardian)

## SCHOOL'S EDUCATIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES:-

We acknowledge our responsibility to support parents in their task of nurturing their children towards human wholeness within a Christian community.

### Therefore we will:-

- provide a friendly welcome to your child and a secure, stimulating, Christian environment in which to learn;
- ensure that your child is valued for who he/she is and helped to make good progress in their spiritual, moral, emotional and academic development;
- treat your child with the dignity and respect they require, encouraging them to full human wholeness;
- demonstrate our faith and our school's foundation in the teachings of Jesus Christ, by what we teach and the way we live and worship in our school;
- do our utmost to provide the best possible education we can for your child and enthusiastic teaching rooted in our beliefs, our values and our skills;
- provide you with information about your child's progress and provide you with opportunities to talk to teachers;
- keep you well informed about school policies and activities through regular letters and newsletters
- set, mark and monitor homework suitable to your child's needs;
- send home an annual report of your child's progress;
- contact you if there is a problem with your child's attendance or punctuality;
- inform you of any concerns regarding your child's behaviour, work or health;
- challenge your child to strive for the highest standard of personal, social and intellectual development and aim for excellence in all they do.

Signed .....  
(For and on behalf of the Governing Body)

## PARENTAL DECLARATION

I/We have read ..... Catholic School's Home-School Agreement.

I/We note and understand the aims and values it has as a Catholic school and the educational opportunities it will provide for my/our child within a Christian context.

I/We acknowledge the type of support outlined in the 'Parental Responsibilities' Statement that will be necessary to ensure my/our child is helped towards reaching their full potential.

I/We acknowledge what the school expects from all pupils.

Signed: ..... Parent/Guardian

.....

of ..... Pupil

..... Pupil (if appropriate)

Date: .....

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