

Catholic Education: A CES Position Paper on Catholic Education in Schools and Sixth Form Colleges



PROMOTING & SUPPORTING CATHOLIC EDUCATION IN ENGLAND AND WALES





Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to set out the position of the Catholic Church on education in the context of a multi-cultural society in terms of:

- the rights of individuals to reasonable self-determination, including the recognition of the importance of diversity and inclusion;
- the way in which the core, underpinning values enable Catholic schools to serve the needs of their pupils; and
- the contribution Catholic schools make to society as a whole.



The Right to Educational Choice in a Multicultural Society

The benefits of diversity

In a homogeneous society some might argue there is no need for diversity in educational provision. However, we live in a pluralist, multi-cultural, multi-faith society. In liberal democracies, cultural diversity is accepted as both a human right and a desirable goal.

Therefore, it is difficult to defend the concept of a uniform model of education without violating the general principle that children should be educated in accordance with the wishes of their parents as far as is compatible with the effective and efficient use of resources (Education Act 1944, Section 76; Human Rights Act 1998, 1st Protocol, Article 2).

Moreover the right to a religious education has been enshrined in the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948, Article 18), the Declaration of the Rights of the Child (1959, Principle 2) and, subsequently, incorporated into our own Human Rights Act of 1998 (Article 14; 1st Protocol, Article 2). Central to all that legislation is the concept that parents are the first and foremost educators of their children and that the state should ensure that any education it provides for children is in conformity with the parents' religious and philosophical convictions insofar as it is practical so to do.

Committed members of faith groups argue strongly against the notion that state-funded education should necessarily be secular in character and stress the importance of a religious perspective in education (Hume, 1995; Williams, 2002). Religious leaders have articulated this principle clearly in contributing to the recent, 'faith school' debate. The comments of the Archbishop of Birmingham, Vincent Nichols, are a fairly typical summary of their collective position:

'...multi-cultural Britain cannot be negotiated in purely secular terms ... no-where is this more important than in education ...'
(Nichols, 2002)

Education which gives no recognition to legitimately held philosophical, ethical, cultural and religious beliefs, runs counter to the thrust of the inclusion agenda and risks alienating significant communities. To force an unwanted secular education dogma on all children, irrespective of their parents' culture and religion is to deny pluralism and adopt authoritarian methods to impose a particular world view. It also runs counter to research into effective educational practice.¹

¹ *Making the Difference: Teaching and Learning Strategies in Successful Multi-ethnic Schools* Blair, Maud et al (1988) The Open University (with DFEE) found that the characteristics of successful schools included sensitivity to the histories, languages, religions and cultures of students and their families.

The state should not use the power of compulsory education to eradicate, however unintentionally, cultures which do not threaten it and from which it may indeed benefit. That is generally recognised in all western, pluralistic societies. They all offer some sort of choice in the matter of schooling they provide or support. So the debate is not between *'one size fits all schools'* or diversity, but about the limits and conditions of the choices that the state can and will support.

Once the principle of choice is accepted, the issues centre upon which choices are acceptable and how they should be provided.

The Catholic community argues strongly that their schools, many but not all established with the financial help of the state, provide real and substantial benefits to society that should be valued and nurtured for the common good. To suppress, remove or financially neuter them would damage society.

The idea that secular education is value free or neutral is fallacious. Secular approaches - such as in the former Soviet Union - are as value-laden and dogmatic as any religion, but often covertly so.

Parents' rights

Education is central to the mission of the Catholic Church. The Church recognises cultural pluralism and upholds the principle of a plurality in school provision as a means of preserving and defending the rights of parents as the prime educators to choose an education for their children in accordance with their wishes, as far as is compatible with the efficient use of resources.

The Catholic Church seeks to support parents by providing schools and sixth form colleges which aim to educate the whole child and help them play a proper part in promoting the common good through the acquisition of values, skills and knowledge appropriate to civic society and the ability and desire to search for truth. Accordingly, it seeks to provide, for those parents, who want it a place in a Catholic school for every Catholic child.

As one arm of the activity of the Church, schools and sixth form colleges aim to be religious communities within the wider Catholic body that promotes, by its teaching, relationships and worship, the following of Christ. Their whole curriculum and way of life is designed to enable their pupils to grow in every way to Christian maturity, so they are rooted in a religious understanding of life which is based on the Gospel, which aims to prepare them for a proper and constructive involvement in society.

Catholic schools and colleges have a distinctive educational philosophy and purpose based on a specific religious understanding of the nature of humanity and the role of the Catholic Church in society². At the heart of a Catholic philosophy of education there is a particular understanding of the human person as a spiritual being, having its origin in God, moving towards Him during life and destined to be with Him when this mortal life is ended.

2 Declaration on Christian Education, 1965.

The strength of Catholic schools and colleges, appreciated by Catholic and non-Catholic parents alike who seek places for their children, is the existence of a robust spiritual and moral value system. This value system attracts significant numbers of non-Catholic parents to educate their children in Catholic settings. However, this is not to be confused with the imposition of Catholicism on pupils of other religious beliefs.

A survey of ethnic minority students in Catholic secondary schools found that a considerable majority (80%) believed that their school encouraged respect for people of different races and religions.³

The legal position was reaffirmed in the 1998 School Standards and Framework Act: if they choose to do so, parents in faith schools, as in other schools, may withdraw their children from religious instruction and from acts of collective worship.

The Church's own guidance reflects a proactive approach to the inclusion and diversity agenda. The Bishops' document **Catholic Schools and Other Faiths**⁴ makes clear the need to respect other faiths and to work with parents to understand the role of the Catholic school in relation to other faiths:

'When a school admits a proportion of children from other faith communities, it should recognise that it is taking on a commitment and a relationship to those communities which calls for a higher degree of openness and dialogue. To do this will require the wholehearted support of the trustees, governors, teachers, parents and diocesan authorities ... It (the school) should ensure that the Religious Education programme includes teaching with integrity about other faiths in their relationship to Christianity ... There may also be a need to hold Parents' Evenings to explore the role of the Catholic school in relation to other faiths . . . The school should be ready to share resources with other schools and with other faith communities - especially if the Catholic school is situated in an area of deprivation or racial tension'.

The Bishops have also published guidelines for Catholic schools considering the admission of pupils of other faiths. They demonstrate a recognition of the need for Catholic schools to be beacons of hospitality and service to the local community. Those guidelines state, first, that:

'The school should consider the nature of the existing diversity of religious understanding and commitment among its present Catholic or Christian pupils, and how this may be influenced by admitting pupils of other Faiths'.

'The school should consult with parents of other faiths who might wish to send their children to the school, and with the Spiritual leaders of their faith communities in order to clarify their expectations and requirements and to see what sort of creative relationship can be established'.

'The school should also seek to clarify situations where any of its practices or policies seem to people of other faiths to constitute proselytising'.

3 This (and other material later in the document) is taken from a considerably more detailed look at the contribution made by Catholic schools to the education of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds: *Ethnicity, Identity and Achievement in Catholic Education*. O'Keefe and Zipfel (2003) CES.

4 Published by the Bishops' Conference 1997.

Maintaining the character of Catholic schools: employment

Catholic schools, in common with other faith schools which are voluntary aided, may give preference, in connection with the appointment, remuneration or promotion of teachers at the school, to those whose religious beliefs or religious practice is in accordance with the tenets of their denomination, i.e., the Roman Catholic faith. Likewise they may give similar preference to those who give or who are willing to give religious education at the school in accordance with the tenets of the Catholic Church. Conduct of a teacher which is incompatible with the precepts of the church, or which fails to uphold its tenets, may be taken into consideration in determining whether the teacher's employment should be terminated.⁵

In addition, the governing body of a voluntary aided school, (like other faith schools) has the power to dismiss an RE teacher on the ground that s/he fails to give religious education '*efficiently and suitably*', without the consent of the LEA.⁶

Appointment of teaching staff is not carried out by means of a rigid adherence to the principle of selecting only practising Catholics. In common with other schools, Catholic schools recognise the importance of effective, professional teaching - as the attainment of pupils testifies. (See below.)

Analysis of teachers by religious status and school type - 2003⁷

	Catholic	Other	Total
Primary	13645	3239	16884
Secondary	10231	8770	19001
Total	23876	12009	35885

In addition, there are almost 200 teachers in special schools, broadly split between Catholic and other staff.

Almost 1,000 full- and part-time teachers work in Catholic sixth form colleges. The balance is similar to the position in special schools.

5 Section 60, School Standards and Framework Act 1998.

6 Section 58, School Standards and Framework Act 1998.

7 Catholic Education Service (CES) Census 2003.



Catholic Schools and Sixth Form Colleges: Contributing to their Communities and to Society

Nearly half a century since the historic 1944 Act some 35% of all primary schools and 16% of all secondary schools have a religious character. The Department for Education and Skills lists twenty different types of religious school. The vast majority belong either to the Church of England or Roman Catholic Church, but there are also a small number provided by minority Christian denominations, some Jewish, Muslim and Sikh schools together with a few joint ventures by different Christian denominations working together in a variety of partnerships.

The commitment of Catholic Bishops to education is recorded in **The Common Good in Education**⁸ in which they identify five key areas that distinguish Catholic schools, including the search for excellence and education for all, with a particular duty to care for the poor and disadvantaged. This is reflected in the Bishops' support for comprehensive status for Diocesan schools. (The seven Catholic grammar schools are run by religious orders.)

Catholic schools and sixth form colleges provide real and substantial benefits to society and should be valued and nurtured for the common good.

The facts speak for themselves. There are 1817 maintained primary and 394 maintained secondary schools, together with 12 non-maintained special schools. (This figure includes 140 schools that have been awarded specialist status.) The parents of more than three-quarters of a million children have chosen to have them educated in these maintained Catholic schools.

Pupil numbers in maintained Catholic schools: CES school statistics: 2003

Type of school	Number of pupils
Primary	429726
Secondary	332070
Total	761796

Just over 18% of all pupils in Catholic schools are not baptised Catholics⁹. However their parents wish them to be educated within a Catholic environment. Where a Catholic school has excess capacity, those places are made available to parents and carers wanting them for their children.

Additionally, over 1,000 pupils are educated in the non-maintained Catholic special schools.

In the sixth form college sector, the Autumn 2003 survey showed that the 16¹⁰ colleges provide education for over 19,000 full-time students.

8 CES 1997.

9 CES Census 2003.

10 Comprising 15 colleges in England and one in Wales.

Student attainment in Catholic schools and sixth form colleges

Objective external data indicates that overall levels of attainment of pupils in Catholic primary schools in both primary and secondary phases are generally high compared to other sectors. HMCI's annual report for 2001/2002 identified 55 Catholic schools as 'outstanding'. *Forty-one Catholic primary schools (in a list of 298) and 16 (in a list of 83) Catholic secondary schools were singled out for having performed well in tests and examinations.*¹¹

They are comparatively effective in terms of examination and test results and their effectiveness becomes more evident the greater the level of social disadvantage as measured by the percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals.

Comparisons of the 1997 national curriculum test results indicate that Catholic schools have a higher percentage of pupils reaching levels 4 and 5 in English, maths and science at Key Stage 2; the differences are most noticeable in schools with the more socially disadvantaged pupils as measured by free school meal eligibility.¹²

Information derived from Ofsted inspection data for schools inspected over the period 1993-1998, shows that Catholic secondary schools provided a higher standard of education than other schools having similar characteristics.¹³

These outcomes are consistent over time. An analysis of GCSE results from 1996-2001 in both 11-18 schools and 11-16 schools shows that for nearly all levels of disadvantage, Catholic schools have a higher percentage of pupils achieving the required standard in each of the six years.

1997-2001 GCSE results by FSM band and gender: 11-18 schools¹⁴

5+ Grade A - C or GVNO Equivalent : Difference +/- Catholic v Non Catholic Schools

% FSM in KS4	1997*	1998		1999		2000		2001	
	All pupils	male	female	male	female	male	female	male	female
Up to 5	+5.3	+2.7	+2.5	+5.5	+4.5	+8.3	+5.2	+8.3	+6.3
5+ - 9	+6.4	+7.9	+3.5	+8.1	+6.4	+9.9	+6.7	+9.9	+6.0
9+ - 13	+7.2	+7.0	+5.9	+6.1	+5.5	+6.9	+5.0	+6.9	+6.7
13+ - 21	+9.7	+8.9	+9.0	+10.6	+8.3	+9.8	+9.7	+9.8	+9.7
21+ - 35	+6.6	+5.4	+11.6	+7.9	+9.9	+9.8	+10.2	+9.8	+11.2
35+ - 50	+3.6	+2.1	+4.6	+2.9	+6.7	+4.3	+8.2	+4.3	+5.8
50+	+1.7	-2.9	+1.9	-0.4	+3.2	-6.2	+8.0	-6.2	+6.8
Grammar	-2.2	-4.0	-2.3	-2.5	-3.2	-2.7	-2.3	-2.7	-0.4

11 HMCI's Annual Report for 2001-2002.

12 Bishops' Conference 1999.

13 *Diversity, Deprivation and the Common Good: Pupil Attainment at Catholic Schools* A Morris. Due for publication by the Catholic Education Service of England and Wales in 2003 [Draft]

14 As above.

1997-2001 GCSE results by FSM band and gender: 11-16 schools¹⁵

5+ Grade A - C or GVNO Equivalent: Difference +/- Catholic v Non Catholic Schools

% FSM in KS4	1997	1998		1999		2000		2001	
	All pupils	male	female	male	female	male	female	male	female
Up to 5	+2.5	+0.7	+4.3	+10.6	+4.2	+10.1	+3.3	+10.0	+6.0
5+ - 9	+6.8	+6.4	+5.0	+7.5	+3.8	+5.1	+6.4	+6.8	+3.8
9+ - 13	+7.1	+4.7	+7.4	+7.7	+8.6	+10.4	+9.4	+6.5	+7.1
13+ - 21	+4.2	+4.0	+3.6	+4.4	+7.4	+5.0	+7.1	+2.5	+7.5
21+ - 35	+7.4	+6.9	+7.8	+5.7	+7.7	+6.1	10.0	+7.9	+9.0
35+ - 50	+9.6	+5.5	+10.5	+6.1	+9.0	+9.1	+9.7	+4.6	6.5
50+	+2.8	+4.5	+4.5	+3.7	-2.6	+0.4	-2.2	+2.4	-1.8

Catholic sixth form colleges, too, demonstrate their commitment to the principles in **The Common Good in Education**.

St Charles Sixth Form College, which was assessed by the LSC as having a student body suffering a 'very high' level of deprivation, was inspected in April 2002. The inspectors concluded that *'The college's response to educational and social inclusion is outstanding'*. They also noted the effectiveness of the college in adding value:

*'...On GCE A-level programmes overall, students get significantly better grades than might be expected, given their prior attainment in GCSEs. On GCE A-level and AVCE courses, the pass rates and the proportion of students who complete their course are broadly in line with sixth form colleges nationally. However, there are very few sixth form colleges with similar levels of deprivation among their students.'*¹⁶

Four Catholic sixth form colleges - St Charles, North Kensington; Christ the King, Lewisham, Loreto, Manchester and Holy Cross, Bury - were identified by Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools as being *'particularly successful'* in his most recent annual report covering 2001-2.

Responding to ethnic diversity in Catholic schools

Following publication of the Macpherson report,¹⁷ the Race Relations (Amendment) Act of 2000 placed responsibilities on public bodies, including schools, to eliminate unlawful racial discrimination and to promote equality of opportunity and good relations between persons of different racial groups. The Commission for Racial Equality published a **Guide for Schools**. The Catholic Education Service published guidance on the Act and a commentary on the CRE guidance targeted particularly at Catholic schools (which is available on the CES website).¹⁸

Catholic schools in England and Wales are, on the whole, ethnically diverse communities.

Catholic secondary schools, on average, have only slightly smaller percentages of ethnic minority pupils than other maintained schools. However, Catholic secondary schools tend to have higher percentages of black pupils, but significantly smaller proportions of Indian, Pakistani and Bangladeshi pupils:

¹⁵ *Diversity, Deprivation and the Common Good: Pupil Attainment at Catholic Schools* A Morris. Due for publication by the Catholic Education Service of England and Wales in 2003 [Draft]

¹⁶ OFSTED/Adult Learning Inspectorate inspection report April 2002.

¹⁷ The Stephen Lawrence Enquiry Home Office, HMSO 1999.

¹⁸ *Guidance for Schools on the Legal Requirements to Promote Race Equality*.

% of individual ethnic groups in Catholic and other maintained secondary schools (2001)¹⁹

	Black Caribbean	Black African	Black other	Indian	Pakistani	Bangladeshi	Chinese	Other ethnic	Total
Cath Sec	2.4	2.6	1.0	1.3	0.6	0.1	0.4	3.3	11.6 ²⁰
Oth Sec	1.3	1.0	0.8	2.7	2.5	1.0	0.4	2.4	12.1

Data from the same year and source shows Catholic schools had lower overall rates of permanent exclusions of pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds compared with other secondary schools:

% of permanent exclusions of ethnic minorities in Catholic and other maintained secondary schools (2001)²¹

	Black Caribbean	Black African	Indian	Pakistani	Bangladeshi	Chinese
Catholic sec schools	0.90	0.25	0.04	0.00	0.00	0.00
Other sec schools	1.24	0.51	0.08	0.23	0.23	0.01

The Catholic community's investment in education

The Catholic population of England and Wales is large, numbering over 4 million. It therefore makes up close to 8% of the entire population.

The Catholic community works in close partnership with Central Government, Local Learning and Skills Councils and Local Education Authorities in its provision of education. Catholic schools, funded by the State and the Catholic Church, make up approximately 10% of the maintained sector in England and Wales.

The Catholic community contributes about £20 million a year towards the maintenance of and improvements to its school buildings and related costs. This is in addition to its contribution to the provision and up-keep of all other schools through normal taxation.

The current insured replacement value of the Catholic schools in England and Wales is approximately £6.5 billion. This figure excludes the value of the Church-owned land on which they stand.

¹⁹ *Ethnicity, Identity and Achievement in Catholic Education*. O'Keeffe and Zipfel (2003) CES.

²⁰ Total reflects roundings.

²¹ *Ethnicity, Identity and Achievement in Catholic Education*. O'Keeffe and Zipfel (2003) CES.



Conclusion

Catholic schools and sixth form colleges are a fundamental requirement if the right of a significant proportion of the community to ensure that their children are educated in a way that reflects their values and beliefs is to be upheld. In carrying out this mission, they provide a demonstrably effective education, as evidenced by pupil attainment. The students come from a wide economic, social, cultural and faith spectrum. In welcoming and responding to this diversity, Catholic schools and colleges are active in equipping their students to live in a multi-cultural and multi-faith society.

Annex A: Historical summary

The provision and funding of Catholic schools

The development of what we recognise as the Catholic system of education today can be traced back to the restoration of the Catholic hierarchy in England in 1850 as the anti-Catholic legislation that had developed since the Reformation was dismantled. England at that time was, in effect, a missionary area for the Catholic faith. The first act of the Bishops as a collective body was to make the provision of Catholic schools their highest priority (Westminster Synod, 1852). The purpose was to ensure the development and transmission of Catholic faith and culture for the Catholic community. At that time schooling was a voluntary activity.

As the state became more involved in education, Acts of Parliament first set up and subsequently confirmed the 'Dual System' of education (Education Act, 1870; 1902; 1944; 1988; 1996, 1998, 2002). The political attacks against the very concept of religiously based education that has been virtually unknown since the 'religious question' appeared to have been resolved by the compromise of the 1944 settlement. The Catholic community supported the settlement, raising large sums of money in collaboration with the state to provide schools. That collaboration took the form of a level of state support towards the cost of building which has risen from the initial 50% of capital costs to 75% in 1959, 80% in 1967, 85% in 1975 and 90% in 2002.

Attitudes to the role of religious belief in maintained education

Political disputes about the role of religious belief in state sponsored education have a long history. It was a thorny issue during the period leading up to the passing of the 1870 Education Act and the basis of non-conformist opposition to the Education Act of 1902 that reorganised education on a municipal basis. School boards, created in 1870, which had been 'filling the gaps' in the voluntary system were abolished and replaced by county and county borough councils responsible for elementary and secondary education. However, while it introduced a co-ordinated national system, it recognised the political impossibility of ending a dual system having, broadly, two different types of school. Those provided by the newly created local authorities were maintained by government grants and local rates. Voluntary, or non-provided schools as they were designated, were funded, mainly, by Christian denominations and maintained by them with the assistance of some Government grant, but not local rates. The Education Act of 1944, by overcoming much of the sectarian bitterness which marked the passing of its 1870 and 1902 predecessors, offered new opportunities for the development of national education delivering equal opportunity and greater social equality.

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