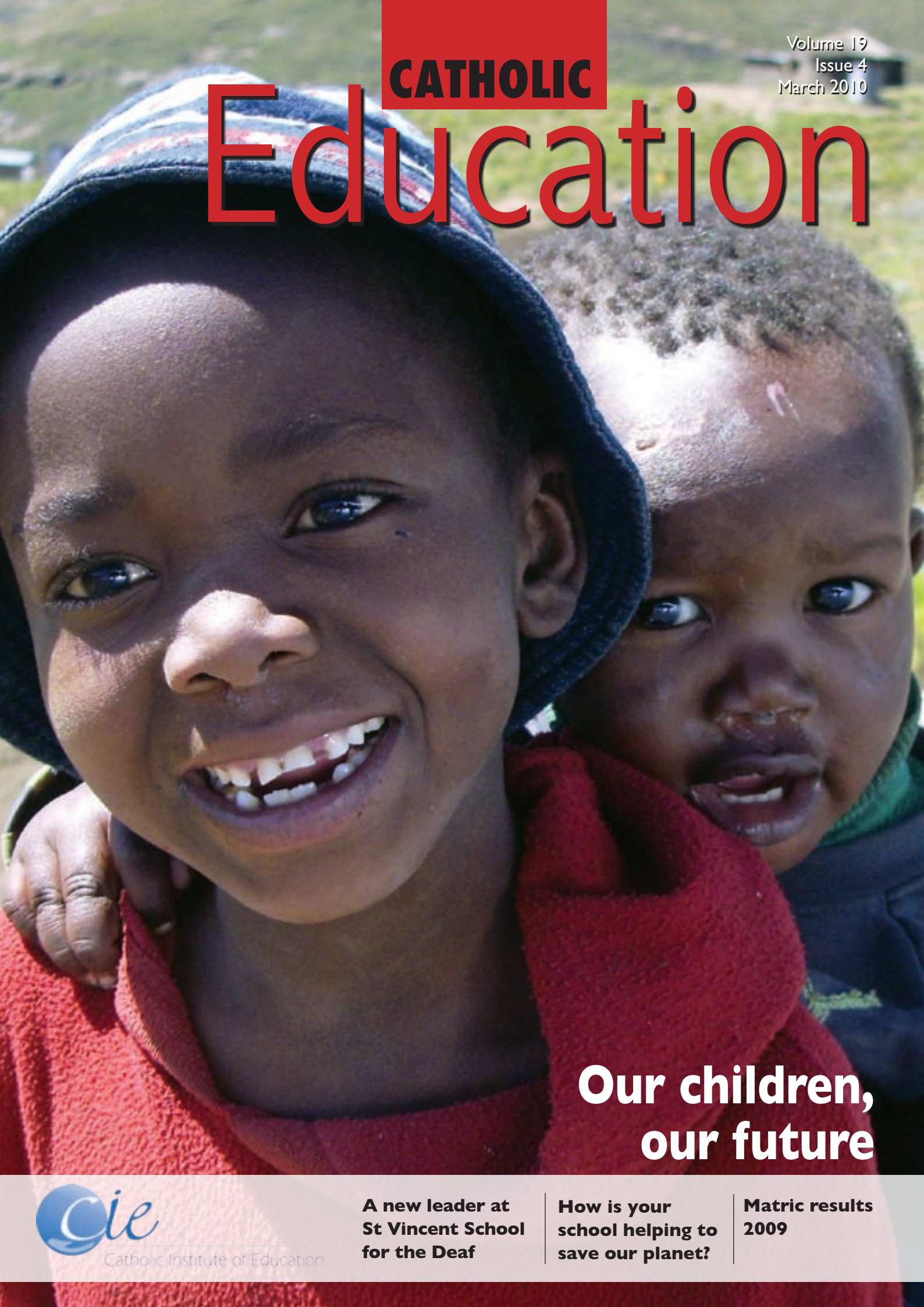


Volume 19  
Issue 4  
March 2010

**CATHOLIC**

# Education



**Our children,  
our future**



Catholic Institute of Education

**A new leader at  
St Vincent School  
for the Deaf**

**How is your  
school helping to  
save our planet?**

**Matric results  
2009**

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On the cover: Children near a Catholic school in Quacha's Nek, Lesotho

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*Catholic Education* strives to provide a forum for discussion, debate and information for and about education in South Africa. Our readers are invited to respond to articles and to send in articles which may be of interest to the broader Catholic education network. The views expressed in *Catholic Education* do not necessarily represent the views of the editor or the board of the CIE.



## ANOTHER LOOK: Standards? Mark Potterton

**T**HROUGHOUT THE WORLD there is a concern, perhaps even an obsession, with educational “standards”.

Much effort goes into developing standards, in the belief that these improve the quality of education. But standards seem to do little to change the complex processes of teaching and learning.

Besides the obvious need for basic inputs in developing-country schools, there is an urgent need for teachers to engage students, develop their imaginations and inspire them to do great things.

The Bishop's Pastoral Statement on Education (2009) puts this well: “Our children are our treasure, our future and our responsibility. We are all one family and nothing can be more important to us than that they should have the love, security and freedom to become the caring and responsible adults that our country and continent so desperately need. God has entrusted them to us and we all have a role to play in their ongoing formation and progress ... Emotional security and productive educational outcomes are the result of caring and disciplined environments in which the educational goals and guidelines are clear. All members of the school community share the responsibility of maintaining the ideals and educational effectiveness of the school; each sector of the school community should be accountable to the degree of their responsibility.”

I wish you well as you embark on another leg of your journey of education.

## How long is the perfect lesson?

Ella Ngobeni

**T**HERE HAS BEEN much discussion in education circles and by policymakers on time spent on tasks in schools, but there has been little focus on the actual lesson duration. How long is the perfect lesson?

Most high school teachers still expect lessons to be timetabled in handy 35- or 40-minute chunks. Independent school teachers are still likely to be planning lessons at those lengths – although things are changing – but in the government sector, timetabling varies from school to school. Some swear by 50 minutes, others prefer an hour and a few even two.

One school of thought believes that 100-minute lessons are the way to go. Schools get to choose how long their lessons should be – as long as curriculum requirements are met. The changes seem to be driven by schools themselves, partly as teaching styles move away from chalk and talk.

Susan Young investigated Varndean School in Brighton, which experimented briefly with the two-hour lesson before settling, four years ago, on 100 minutes. The school, a specialist technology college, runs a fortnightly timetable with three lessons a day. The principal says that teachers like the system, but he gets complaints from parents who are teachers elsewhere, who say, “I am a teacher and I couldn't do 100-minute lessons and I don't see how your teachers can.”

“What we've tried to do for the past three years is to configure the school around what's best for learning rather than what's most organisationally convenient,” he says. “But we put a lot of effort into professional development.”

He adds: “We do an annual survey of our staff, asking how they rate aspects of their lessons. By and large, teachers think their teaching is more effective and their planning has improved tremendously. They've only got three lessons to plan for, rather than five, and the kids have only got three loads of materials to bring.

“Pupils come in, have tutor time, have their first lesson, then break, second lesson, then lunch, third lesson, then go home. There's less movement between classrooms – moving around from one place to another, which can take up to 15 minutes from a lesson. There's more time, in theory, to be spent on learning.”

Research does show that 20 minutes is the optimum time for listening to people talk, but there is nothing in the research to say people automatically learn in 35-, 45-, or 60-minute chunks. One educationalist feels that: “Teachers can wing it in an hour-long lesson; they can be under-planned and under-prepared. You spend 10 minutes calming the class, talk for 25, set them an exercise and finish. You can't do that with 100 minutes!”

Write to *Catholic Education* about your ideal lesson length.



# SNIPPETS

## Financial crisis threatens education

Unesco report, January 19, 2010

**T**HE AFTERSHOCK OF the global financial crisis threatens to deprive millions of children in the world's poorest countries of an education, warns the 2010 Education for All Global Monitoring Report, *Reaching the Marginalized*. With 72-million children still out of school, a combination of slower economic growth, rising poverty and budget pressures could erode the gains of the past decade.

The 2010 report charts some spectacular advances in education over the past decade, a striking contrast with the "lost decade" of the 1990s. Since 1999, the number of children not attending school has fallen by 33-million — and more children are completing a full cycle of primary education.

Setbacks in education will have wider consequences, too. With a major international summit planned on the United Nations' development targets — the Millennium Development Goals — in 2010, the report points out that lost opportunities for education will act as a brake on economic growth, poverty reduction, and progress in health and other areas.

The report's authors identify sub-Saharan Africa as an area for priority action. Education systems across the region could be deprived of around US\$4.6-billion per year in public spending in 2009 and 2010 as a direct result of the crisis.



## ARKive

**W**ILDLIFE FILMS AND photographs are vital weapons in the battle to save endangered plants and animals from the brink of extinction.



So, with the help of the world's best filmmakers, photographers, conservationists and scientists, ARKive is creating the ultimate multimedia guide to the world's endangered species. Visit the ARKive website, [www.arkive.org](http://www.arkive.org), for tons of information and photographs.

## Smart mud could be new plastic

Colin Barras, *New Scientist*, January 20, 2010

**C**OULD A MIXTURE of water and clay replace plastics? The desire to wean the world off oil has sparked all manner of research into novel transportation fuels, but manufacturing plastics uses large amounts of oil too. Researchers at the University of Tokyo, Japan, think their material could be up to the task.

Takuzo Aida and his team mixed a few grams of clay with 100g of water in the presence of tiny quantities of a thickening agent, sodium polyacrylate, and an organic "molecular glue". The thickening agent teases the clay apart into thin sheets, increasing its surface area and allowing the glue to get a better hold on it.

This means that while the mixture is almost 98% water, it forms a transparent and elastic hydrogel, with sufficient mechanical strength to make a 3.5cm-wide self-supporting bridge.

## Phonics. Lost in translation

Kirsty Scott, *The Guardian*, January 19, 2010

**S**USAN ELLIS, a reader in Child and Primary Education at Strathclyde University, says there are historical reasons for the different education approaches taken in England and Scotland, but sees flaws in both of them.

"In England you have a very centralised curriculum where policymakers have to be seen to be doing something, but are often quite distant from the people who have to make their decisions work," she says. "In Scotland there is a much more devolved system, where decisions are made much closer to those who will have to implement them."

Ellis says most current research shows that children need literacy teaching that is tailored to the individual. "I don't think the English system (phonics) works particularly well," she says. "Those from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds need good, sharp, upfront, teacher-driven interactive phonics right from the minute they start school. Middle-class kids who come with quite a lot of book knowledge do better when they are given self-directed activities at the beginning, and a sharper, hard input of more complex phonics later. The English approach, saying, 'Everyone has to do it that way' is not going to meet all these different needs. The Scottish approach, saying, 'It is up to you,' while not giving very clear advice, does not help either."

Tom Burkard, an expert in phonics and director of the educational charity the Promethean Trust, thinks that of the two, the English system is less likely to deliver results. "Any programme introduced in a top-down managerial way is doomed to failure," he says.

Read more at: [www.guardian.co.uk/education](http://www.guardian.co.uk/education)

## Countdown 2010

**C**OUNTDOWN 2010 IS a network of active partners working together towards the United Nations' 2010 biodiversity target. Each partner commits to specific efforts to tackle the causes of biodiversity loss. The Countdown 2010 Secretariat — hosted by the International Union for Conservation of Nature's regional office for Pan-Europe — facilitates and encourages action, promotes the importance of the 2010 biodiversity target and assesses progress towards 2010. Visit [www.countdown2010.net](http://www.countdown2010.net) for more information.



## Up, up and away: a soccer activity

**Object:** To practise soccer skills using balloons.

**Equipment:** Heavy-duty round balloons

**Description:** Balloons can be effective teaching aids when teaching lead-up skills. They add sparkle to classes practising ball-skill fundamentals. Soccer kicks such as the instep, side of the foot, and volley can all be practised with a balloon. The thigh, instep and chest traps also lend themselves to balloon usage. Throw-ins can also be practised by painting lines on the balloons to check for spin.

**Variations:** Practise ball skills for other sports, including volleyball, basketball, football, etc.



“Education is not the filling of a pail, but the lighting of a fire.”

— William Butler Yeats, poet

# A new leader for St Vincent School

## for the Deaf

Mark Potterton

*Johannesburg-born Ingrid Parkin has taken over the leadership of St Vincent School for the Deaf. Ingrid, a Wits-educated teacher, is the first deaf woman to lead a school for the deaf in South Africa. I spoke to her a month after she took on her new assignment.*

**I**NGRID PARKIN, MOTHER to two girls, is a warm, welcoming person. From the moment I walk into her office I feel at ease. She is a woman of vision and has great ideas for the future of the school. Building on the school's already solid history, she sees it becoming a model of best practice for education for the deaf in South Africa. She is keen to ensure that the children coming out of the school are independent and have solid values. One of the areas she intends paying particular attention to is developing good reading skills at the school; she is also keen to ensure that the children acquire critical thinking skills. Ingrid's vision includes renovating parts of the school that have deteriorated. "There's also a need to replace ageing equipment. I really want to get more visual material and to eventually get smart boards – these are great in educating deaf children." Ingrid is committed to teacher development and to ensuring that teachers are up to date with trends in education for the deaf and sign language.

Ingrid shares a story of how she was received by the children at the school. "Many of them didn't believe that I am deaf," she says. "I noticed a lot of debate about this matter. Some children eventually came to ask me if I was really deaf."

Ingrid speaks with real experience about deafness and education for the deaf. Ingrid left DeafSA, where she was director of education and passionate about championing the cause of deaf people, to come to St Vincent. Ingrid tells me that 70% of deaf people in South Africa are functionally illiterate! And that at least 70% of deaf people are unemployed!

*“Some children eventually came to ask me if I was really deaf.”*

St Vincent School promotes deaf awareness in the hearing world. The school's signing choir performs at various public functions, as well as at other schools. The school continues to welcome a variety of local and international visitors, ranging from students to researchers. The school also shares its campus with Pridwin School, a unique venture between a school for the hearing and one for the deaf.



Mrs Ingrid Parkin

Ingrid's enthusiasm and warmth become more evident as we move from classroom to classroom. Children come forward to hug and chat to her. Ingrid is a true role model in this school. She points out the areas of the school that need attention: broken tiles and flaking paint. "We don't have much funds to do things; many of our children come from poor families and can't pay fees, so we will have to raise the funds."

Ingrid, who is married to Terence Parkin, the deaf swimmer who claimed seven gold medals at the Deaflympics last year, is committed to championing the cause of deaf people in South Africa. In July, Ingrid, funded by DeafSA, will present papers at the International Congress on the Education of the Deaf in Vancouver, Canada. Ingrid really would like to take teachers from her school with her to benefit from this unique experience, and has already begun fundraising to this effect.

Ingrid is a leader who will take St Vincent places. Her enthusiasm, creativity and ability to work with people will go far in this challenging position.



Ingrid Parkin and students

# Listen to us, too!

Mark Potterton and Nontobeko Sithole

**T**HE CATHOLIC INSTITUTE of Education, through its programmes, has encouraged schools to listen to the voices of children. A range of surveys and other approaches have been created to encourage children to say what they think about being at school.

## Why should children participate?

The United Nations adopted the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1989. This document has extraordinary implications for the development and protection of children. The convention protects the rights of children, but also calls for more opportunities for children to have a say in their own futures.

## What potential do children have?

Children have a lot of energy. They are able to do things, change things and improve their environments. This energy is not always recognised today and children are sometimes allowed to become very passive.

*“When children work together they learn to co-operate, and to communicate with their peers and other people.”*

Children can be engaged in projects to improve their environments, help needy people or raise money for specific projects. By working with other people, children learn to care and realise that they can make the world a better place. When children work together, they learn to co-operate, and to communicate with their peers and other people.

## Why children’s views matter

Children spend a lot of time in school, and yet have very little say on how schools are organised. The curriculum is decided by adults, as is how the timetable works and how learning takes place. School life is governed by rules, bells and marks. Children find themselves in groups and there is precious little time to relate to adults in school on their own.

There is a growing trend around the world to listen to children in school. Children are being encouraged to provide feedback on their experiences at school. This information is being used to improve schools and to help school principals make better planning decisions.

## What children say about participation

- “We can make responsible decisions if given a chance.”
- “It is okay for us to make the wrong decision sometimes, even if we know all the information.”
- “Please listen to us instead of ignoring us, and take notice of what we have to say.”
- “Expect an opinion from us, and ask for it.”
- “We need adults to guide us towards making good decisions, but we also need you to let us practise making the wrong decisions as well.”

## Why is there resistance to children’s rights?

Schools and families can be very authoritarian. Control is important, as is following the rules. For many people, children’s rights mean a loss of control over children. Some people feel children have enough rights and that allowing more will result in the collapse of discipline and teaching. The resistance to children’s rights has deep roots in society and culture. It doesn’t help to say that children have equal rights to those of their



Children’s voices should be heard

teachers and parents. Children always start out in life dependent on the caring decisions of adults. But education is about children gradually taking more responsibility for their own decisions and actions – this is how mature adults are developed.

Allowing children to participate in decision-making and to make decisions doesn’t mean that parents, teachers and caregivers’ authority is undermined. Parents and teachers need to realise that children do have a right to question decisions that affect them – good education is about explaining why some decisions are based on wisdom.

## What can child and youth organisations offer?

Youth organisations provide opportunities for young people to play active roles. Children can learn responsibility and important life skills. Children learn what it is like to be committed to an organisation and often have to manage activities or the organisation itself. Children and young people learn how to convene meetings, keep minutes and work in committees.

Organisations such as Scouts, Girl Guides and Young Christian Students also engage in community service. Here, children and young people experience what it is like to offer service. Children’s participation and involvement can help children and young people:

- Develop a range of social and communication skills, and build confidence and the capacity to participate in decision-making.
- Become politically aware and active.
- Learn about and demonstrate their capacities for good citizenship.
- Articulate their needs, but also demonstrate their own abilities.

- Improve conditions and safety.
- Improve self-reflective processes and identity.
- Accord others the rights of respect and dignity as equal human beings.

## What is participation?

According to the international children’s charity, Save the Children, participation is about having the opportunity to express a view, influence decision-making and achieve change. Children’s participation is an informed and willing involvement of all children, including the most marginalised and those of different ages and abilities, in any matter concerning them, either directly or indirectly. Children’s participation is a way of working and an essential principle that cuts across all programmes and takes place in all arenas – from homes to government, from local to international levels.

## What should you think about to improve participation?

- How can adults be helped to listen to, and learn from, children and young people?
- What is the best way to involve children and young people in the design and delivery of training?
- How can children and young people get the information they need to participate?
- Is it possible to reduce jargon in agendas, papers and discussions? Or is this the language children need to learn?
- How can decision-making be accessible to less confident or inexperienced and younger people?
- How do you encourage participation without patronising or overloading children and young people?
- Is there capacity building for children and young people?

## What ethics should guide work with children?

Any work with children must happen within an ethical framework. The following framework may be useful:

**Participant centred:** The work should be based on children’s own meanings and understandings.

**Informed consent:** Children should be fully aware of the purpose of their participation.

**Confidentiality:** Children should understand and know the boundaries of confidentiality.

**Risks:** The risks to children by being involved should be considered and averted.

**Transparency:** Staff should be open and honest about the purposes of processes and with whom information will be shared.

**Feedback:** Children and young people are entitled to have feedback, in an appropriate format, resulting from their involvement.

More information about children’s participation can be obtained from Nontobeko Sithole at the CIE on (011) 433 1888.

# Towards a humble Church:

## Dublin Diocese and child abuse

Timothy Radcliffe

At the end of 2009 *The Tablet* published a talk, given by the former Master of the Dominicans to priests of the Diocese of Dublin, in two parts. In his first talk, he highlighted the fear and anger caused by revelations of child abuse. Here, he asks how the Church can rid itself of the clericalism besetting it.

**FRIENDSHIP WITH JESUS** – intimacy – means learning to be gentle and lowly of heart. Then we shall find rest for our souls. But if one thinks of the Catholic Church, the first word that springs to mind might not be “humble”.

I have given retreats for dioceses in 15 countries since I finished my term as Master of the Dominican Order in 2001. The vast majority of priests and bishops whom I have met are simple and unpretentious people who just wish to serve the people of God. But this personal humility has to be sustained in the teeth of a clerical culture, common to all Christian denominations, which stresses rank and power.

The terrible crisis of sexual abuse is deeply linked to the way that power can corrupt human relationships, which is why it touches all the churches, even if the Catholic Church happens to have been more in the spotlight recently. Celibacy is not, I believe, the source of the crisis, otherwise it would be the case that Catholic priests have a higher rate of offence, which, it seems, we do not.

We shall only really address this crisis if we learn from Jesus, who is “gentle and lowly of heart”, and find ways of embodying authority that honours the equal dignity of all the baptised, and cherishes the weak and vulnerable. Careful vetting of candidates for the priesthood and child-safety procedures are necessary, but they will not get to the root of the problem.

Every institution always seeks to preserve and augment its power, but the philosopher, Charles Taylor, in *A Secular Age*, has traced the genesis of “a culture of control” from the 17th century onwards. Society is seen as a mechanism, which needs to be adjusted and manipulated, rather than an organism.

Monarchs claimed absolute power even over the Church. Imperial powers took possession of the world; millions of people were enslaved and treated as commodities. Once society has ceased to believe in God’s gentle providential government of the world, then the state must take His place and impose its will.



Timothy Radcliffe

This culture of power is perhaps one reason for the widespread abuse of children in our society. The Church, alas, has often been infected by this same culture of control. This has happened partly because the Church has for centuries struggled to defend itself against the powers of this world that want to take it over. From the Roman Empire at the time of its birth, until the Communist empires of the 20th

century, the Church has fought to protect its existence, and often ended up mirroring what it opposed.

We will not have a Church that is safe for the young until we learn from Christ and become again a humble Church in which we are all equal children of the one Father and authority is never oppressive.

**“The vast majority of priests and bishops whom I have met are simple and unpretentious people who just wish to serve the people of God.”**

At the end of the Middle Ages, the priesthood was in crisis. It was unable to respond to the challenges of a new world of widespread literacy. The parish clergy were poorly educated, sometimes barely able to celebrate the Mass, often living with concubines. The response to this crisis led to an extraordinary renewal of the priesthood, with a new spirituality, new seminaries, a more profound theological formation and a new

strict discipline. Without this, the Church would have found it hard to survive the rise of Protestantism.

But this Tridentine understanding of priesthood is, in its turn, showing signs of crisis, of which the sexual abuse scandal is just a symptom. Its stiff clericalism and authoritarianism, unsurprising perhaps in the context of our past battles, do not help the Church now to thrive and be a sign of God’s friendship for humanity. And so we need a new culture of authority, from the Vatican to the parish council, which lifts people up into the mystery of loving equality, which is the life of the Trinity.

Crises are not to be feared. It is through repeated crises that God draws closer to his people. Israel’s worst crisis was the destruction of the Temple and the monarchy, and exile to Babylon ...

Israel lost everything that gave her identity: her worship, her nationhood. Then she discovered God closer to her than ever before. God was present in the law, in the people’s mouths and hearts, wherever they were, however far from Jerusalem. The Israelites lost God only to receive Him more closely than they could have imagined.

**“Painfully, the Lord is demolishing our high towers and our clerical pretensions to glory and grandeur so that the Church may be a place in which we may encounter God and each other more intimately.”**

Then that difficult cross-grained man, Jesus, turned up, breaking the beloved law, eating on the Sabbath, touching the unclean, and hanging out with prostitutes. He seemed to smash all that they loved, the very way that God was present in their lives. But that was only because God wished to be present even more intimately, as one of us, with a human face. And at every Eucharist, we remember how we had to lose Him on the Cross, but again only to receive Him more closely, not as a man among us, but as our very life.

In the Office of Readings for the first week of Advent, we heard: “For the Lord of hosts has a day against all that is proud and lofty, against all that is lifted up and high; against all the cedars of Lebanon, lofty and lifted up; and against all the oaks of Bashan; against all the high mountains, and against all the lofty hills, against every high tower, and against every fortified wall”

(Isaiah 2:12-15). But this was so that God could dwell again in the midst of his humbled people: “Then the Lord will create over the whole site of Mount Zion and over its places of assembly a cloud by day and smoke and the shining of a flaming fire by night. Indeed, over all the glory there will be a canopy. It will serve as a pavilion, a shade by day from the heat, and a refuge and a shelter from the storm and rain” (Isaiah 4:5-6).

Painfully, the Lord is demolishing our high towers and our clerical pretensions to glory and grandeur so that the Church may be a place in which we may encounter God and each other more intimately. Jesus promises rest for our souls. Often we priests are consumed by a destructive activism in our service of the people. Indeed, this crisis of sexual abuse may aggravate the temptation to show that we at least are wonderful priests incessantly devoted to our work, always available on our mobile phones. That is salvation by works and not by grace.

Franciscan Thomas Merton believed that this hyper-activism was in collusion with the violence of our society: “The rush and pressures of modern life are a form, perhaps the most common form, of its innate violence. To allow oneself to be carried away by a multitude of conflicting concerns, to surrender to too many demands, to commit oneself to too many projects, to want to help everyone in everything, is to succumb to violence. More than that, it is co-operation in violence.”

If we let this implicit violence infect our lives, then it will come out somehow. It may overflow into violent words. We may do violence to ourselves through drink. We may fall into sexual violence, and be caught in the horror of abuse of the vulnerable.

So if we face this terrible crisis of sexual abuse with courage and faith, then it may precipitate a profound renewal of the Church. We can discover Jesus’ commandments not as a heavy burden that crushes people, but as the invitation to his friendship. We can be liberated from using power harmfully in the Church, which is ultimately rooted in secularism, and become more like the Christ who was lowly and humble of heart, and we shall find rest for our souls.

(Reprinted with kind permission from *The Tablet*, January 2, 2010)

**“We will not have a Church that is safe for the young until we learn from Christ and become again a humble Church.”**

# The Catholic School and its Religious Education programme

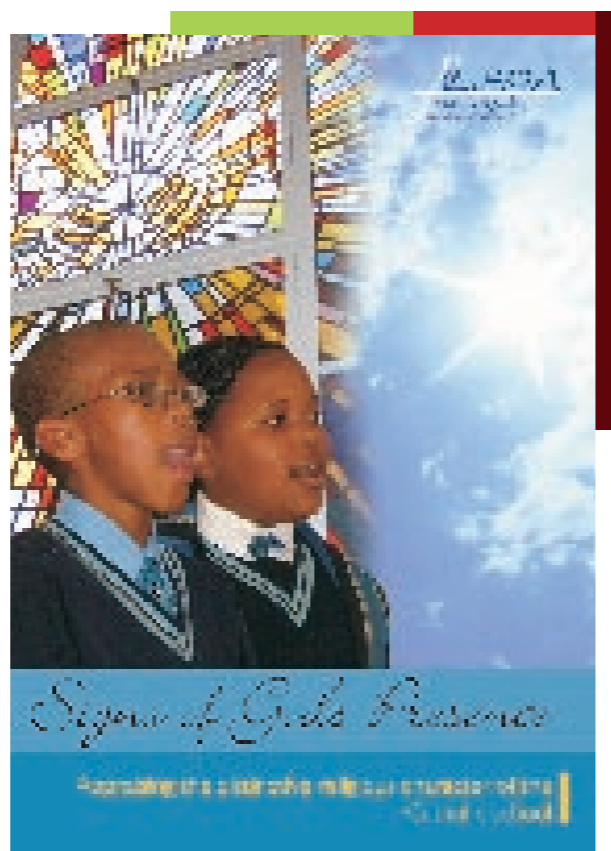
John McCormick

**T**HE CATHOLIC SCHOOLS Proprietors' Association (CaSPA) requires all Catholic schools to evaluate their ethos and asks that they use *Signs of God's Presence* to do this. While some schools might do more, CaSPA recommends that schools do this appraisal continuously over a three-year cycle. Last year, I wrote three articles on Statement 1, which considered the policy obligations placed on Catholic schools by the Catholic Church, through the Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference (SACBC) and CaSPA, and the state. I will continue this year with a focus on Statement 2: "The Catholic school offers a substantial and coherent Religious Education programme, across the whole school."

Let's begin by reminding ourselves of three things. First, the curriculum of the Catholic school is the selection of learning areas or subjects from the National Curriculum that it is obliged, or has chosen to teach, plus Religious Education. Second, Catholic schools, both independent and as public schools on private property, have the right to a "distinctive religious ethos". Third, the Religious Education programme in the Catholic school contributes, therefore, to both the school's Catholic ethos and curriculum.

**"Catholic schools, both independent and as public schools on private property, have the right to a 'distinctive religious ethos'."**

To understand the need for, and the nature of, a "substantial and coherent Religious Education programme", it may be helpful to identify the ways in which it is made manifest in school life: an assembly programme; planned liturgical celebrations; a timetabled Religious Education learning programme for each grade; retreat or reflection days for staff and students; one or more service projects to the wider community; and voluntary participation in a co-curricular faith-based youth programme. Particular arrangements can also be made to accommodate the religious needs of various groups of learners: a chapel, grotto, quiet space or designated classroom can provide the school community with spaces for quiet reflection and prayer; an arrangement with the parishes of Catholic learners will allow the school to offer sacramental preparation; similarly, arrangements with Muslim families, for instance, might include provision of a suitable space for Friday prayer.



Cover of *Signs of God's Presence*

*Fostering Hope*, endorsed by the SACBC, is the policy document that frames the Religious Education programme in the Catholic school. It covers areas such as the role of the Catholic school and a vision for Religious Education; asks for a supportive environment that includes an explicit understanding and agreement with family and parish; and encourages an experience of Religious Education that is cognitively challenging, varied and interesting, and sensitive to religious diversity and the needs of wider society. If you haven't looked at it recently, then this year might be a good opportunity to revisit it with staff, particularly since each section has some questions to facilitate reflection on current practice and to invite thought about what else might need to be put in place.

However, Catholic school staff should be aware of the Department of Basic Education's National Policy on Religion and Education (*Government Gazette*, No. 1307, September 12, 2003). The national policy addresses the area of religious observance in public schools and the understanding and

approach to religion in the National Curriculum. Paragraph 16 also explicitly recognises the right of independent schools and public schools on private property, with deeds of agreement concerning their distinctive religious character in place to foster their ethos, and exempts them from prescriptions concerning religious observance and religious instruction, while expecting them to meet the requirements of the National Curriculum. This can be done by teaching "religion", either as content in learning areas such as Life Orientation, Arts and Culture, and Human and Social Sciences, or as the Religion Studies elective for Grades 10 to 12, according to the learning programmes for each particular grade and the prescribed outcomes and assessment standards.

**"A good Religious Education programme in the hands of a skilled and knowledgeable teacher can find plenty of room for sceptical views and robust debate."**

Schools using the CIE Religious Education materials, *Lifebound* and *CORD*, will know that these have an ecumenical and interfaith awareness, together with identified areas of overlap with the National Curriculum, built into them. Thus, although the understanding of Religious Education in the Catholic school is closer to what the national policy refers to as "religious instruction", as opposed to "religion in education" or "Religion Studies", Catholic schools should rather see these two approaches as complementary.

While Catholic schools are exempt from the requirements for

religious observance in public schools, there is a sense in which *Fostering Hope* and the National Policy on Religion in Education share a common concern for sensitivity towards religious diversity and inclusion.

To this end, days of significance to members of various religious communities at the school, and in wider South African society, together with days of secular and national importance, especially with regards to human rights and environmental issues, can be planned into an assembly programme with the help of *The Calendar of Religious Festivals and Supplement* distributed by the CIE each year.

Catholic schools will want to make sure that applicants for teaching posts and the parents of prospective learners are fully aware of the school's ethos and Religious Education programme – that teachers and learners are willing to participate in all aspects of the religious life of the school. A good understanding of Catholic education, and the place of Religious Education in this, helps to find answers to difficulties that arise: assembly programmes can give recognition to all members of the school community; liturgical celebrations can be carried out with the awareness that they are school celebrations and that the school community is not – at least not usually – the same as the parish; service work can be done for the common good, or out of a common concern for social or environmental justice. Arrangements for the sacramental preparation of Catholic learners can also be made.

A good Religious Education programme in the hands of a skilled and knowledgeable teacher can find plenty of room for sceptical views and robust debate. Our religions are about making us all better human beings, more mindful of our relationships with others, with all life, and with the great Providence who sustains us all.

*In John's next article, he'll focus on Religious Education as a learning programme in the Catholic school.*



# How is your school helping

## to save our planet?

Ella Ngobeni



Every day children go to school and participate in a variety of different classroom activities. They read books aloud as a group, paint in art classes and run around on the playground. But what if we could find a way to work in activities that would help children come together to help care for the environment? If this sounds good, then talk to your school about working on activities that can help children gain an environmentally friendly education, as well as work together for a common goal. Activities such as organising a clothing drive, planting a class garden, holding a class book swap and fundraising for an environmental charity, can all help children to think more about the Earth.

### Shades of green

Many schools already recycle paper, glass and other materials. Write and tell us what your school is doing.

### Stationery

It takes about 17 trees to make one ton of paper! So start thinking about using recycled stationery. Just think of how many exercise books are thrown away at the end of each year. Try to find recycled notebooks and paper for use at school. Watch out for the extensive stationery lists that some schools hand out at the beginning of the year. Getting all the stuff on the list not only costs a fortune, but children often don't learn to use their stationery responsibly.



### School uniforms

Recycle school uniforms! Does your school hold second-hand uniform sales? If it doesn't, then organise one. Uniform sales benefit the environment, cash-conscious parents and school funds. If you are a parent and you do buy new, think ahead – instead of purchasing the cheapest brand that will need replacing after just a few weeks, buy well-made, good-quality items that will still look good wash after wash, and which can be re-used and recycled by other children.



### School lunches

Reduce the amount of food packaging used on a daily basis to cut down on rubbish production. Encourage parents to choose lunch snacks that do not come in excessive packets and wrappings. Get parents to invest in a good lunch box and to buy a leak-proof drinks container to store fresh juice or water in.



### Plant a class garden

Whether or not they eventually produce flowers or vegetables, gardens can be an important part of a child's science education. If you need to convince teachers of this, remind them that you can study the soil, the planting process, the growth and life of a plant, and climate effects on plants.



Class gardens require a good amount of labour, as well as outdoor space and supplies, and may require some extra planning.

### Class book swap

Books are fun and very important for a student's education, but books can be harmful to the Earth if they are not recycled properly. Rather than throwing books out, children could swap books in an organised way. Simply ask children to bring in a book they no longer want, display them all on a table and allow students to select one each to take home.



### Fundraising for the environment

Some schools prefer activities that don't require children to donate anything themselves. So fundraising for an environment-related charity is one way in which children can help the environment, without placing an extra burden on their own families. Children can organise a read-a-thon, sell cakes or raffle off their own works of art to raise funds for a good cause. Encouraging friendly competition between classes can also help spur on fundraising efforts.



### Tips for recycling at school



Children can be proactive in recycling waste produced at school:

- Collect newspapers, other paper, glass and aluminium cans and sell these for school funds.
- Don't bin magazines and comics – organise a magazine swap each month, then ultimately either recycle, or use the magazines for craft projects.
- Don't dump electrical items – have regular collections of old computer equipment and mobile phones to donate to poorer communities.
- Make compost from the school's kitchen waste. Most raw food waste and peelings can be successfully composted, including uncooked fruit and vegetables, teabags, eggshells, leaves and dead plants.

Get more ideas at these websites:

[www.recyclezone.org.uk](http://www.recyclezone.org.uk)

[www.wastewatch.org.uk](http://www.wastewatch.org.uk)

# Catholic Education

## Quality Education: Doing our Best for Every Child

Anne Baker

**I**N SEPTEMBER 2010, it will be six years since the second National Catholic Schools' Congress. At that event, delegates and owners from across South Africa gathered in Randburg to reflect, discuss and debate the state of Catholic education in South Africa. A vision for the future of Catholic schools was developed and accepted.

*"Gathered at the National Catholic Schools' Congress, we rejoice in the great advances that our young democracy has made. However, we acknowledge with pain that the communities in which we minister remain in need of healing. Ours is a society where poverty and social pressures bring despair, family life is declining, HIV/AIDS ravages our children and young adults, and financial disparity is increasing. Conscious that our schools also experience these realities, we are impelled to respond with urgency and compassion."*

*Extract from the Congress Vision Statement*

Ten Direction Statements, which covered all the important aspects of Catholic school life here in South Africa, were drawn up and voted on. It is time to stop and reflect on how successfully these have been implemented. The Catholic Schools Proprietors' Association (CaSPA) executive committee, together with the Catholic Institute of Education (CIE), has become the driving force in implementing the Direction Statements.

It was the work of a Conference of the Cape Catholic Schools' Network that sowed the seed for the approach used. Mike Hoare, Director of the Cape Town Catholic Schools' Office (CSO), shared how they developed themes from the Direction Statements. These were modified and refined by the CaSPA executive and the idea of an annual CaSPA theme was born. The CIE and Catholic Schools' Offices have promoted the themes around the country.

The successful Care of the Teacher Year came from Direction Statement 1, which speaks of pastoral care within the school community and beyond. The launch in January 2006 was covered by the national media. People in the network embraced this theme and a variety of events, ranging from pamper days to retreats and workshops on personal finance, were held. These were to affirm teachers in their vocation.

The second theme came from Statement 7, about building and developing schools' communities. Packs and suggestions were sent to schools to promote and assist with the theme, Parents

and Schools Building Community. Direction Statements 4 and 5 were the basis for the 2008 theme focus on Religious Education. A very successful conference was held at Maris Stella, Durban, with nearly 400 people attending. Renowned guest speakers inspired religious educators and a professional society was formed. The instrument to ensure the distinctive Catholic character of schools was revised and the CaSPA resource, *Signs of God's Presence*, was produced. The Proprietors' Association made it policy for every school to use the appraisal tool over a three-year period.

In 2009, the theme that focused on Direction Statement 3, Sharing of Resources, proved to be the most challenging.

The statement acknowledged that "within our Catholic education network there are schools with an abundance of resources and those with limited resources – human and material; we commit ourselves to share the resources at our disposal and put them at the service of those in need."

While principals' forums tried hard to implement the Sharing of Resources theme, there was a general reluctance across the network to embrace the challenge of sharing at all levels.

**"We commit ourselves to share the resources at our disposal and put them at the service of those in need."**

This year's theme focuses on quality. Direction Statement 6 urges the implementation of quality management systems. The theme, Catholic Education, Quality Education: Doing our Best for Every Child, is about continuing to make our schools places of excellent education. The poor performance of a few of our schools in the National Senior Certificate examination makes this theme very relevant.

The CIE has developed the manual, *Fully Alive*, to assist schools to review their quality. This manual has been designed to dovetail with *Signs of God's Presence* and, used together, they can ensure that Catholic schools will truly do their best for each and every child.

Contact your local CIE or CSO office for assistance with the implementation of *Fully Alive*.

# Asking life's most important questions

Julian Hewitt

**M**EAN-SPIRITED TEACHERS who could easily have starred as Charles Dickens' Scrooge character, bullying at the hands of learners whose facial hair was already profuse by Grade 6, initiation activities that would not be out of place in the army and the all-too-frequent trouser-warming sessions in the headmaster's office – these seem to be all-too-common reactions when stirring up memories of someone's schooling experience.

Given that I spent all of 12 years at school, I have often wondered about the role of education in shaping who and where I am today. In a world where bookshelves cry out for attention with motivational, spiritual and leadership bestsellers, it is quite satisfying to feel that I made that connection to my purpose early on.

While the school I went to was far from a leading one in academic, sporting or cultural greatness, there is something truly exciting that has emerged from the small group of 54 classmates who matriculated with me.

In the 13 years since that day, when, with immense relief, we wrote the last letter on the last word of the last exam, an amazing abundance of talent has blossomed in my fellow pupils.

There is a horticulturalist managing 300 people in London, a former television presenter, a comedian who starred in a long-running soap opera, an accountant in the Cayman Islands, a doctor running an entire hospital in East London, a geologist exploring Africa's subterranean riches, a music lecturer at the University of Cape Town, a corporate executive working at a leading multinational, an MBA graduate-to-be, a computer programming expert, as well as a healthy sprinkling of budding entrepreneurs.

These are far from the staid and more socially acceptable doctors, lawyers and accountants who seem to come so frequently from the upper echelons of South Africa's leading educational institutions.

I myself embarked on a whirlwind of profound and deeply rewarding activities since matriculating in 1996. This included a stint as a sports coach at a leading Oxford preparatory school and travelling around most of Western Europe before my 18th birthday. These activities flowed into heading up the local, national and regional office of the world's largest student organisation, receiving international leadership recognition in the process. My journey has taken me to more than 40 countries and given me the privilege of meeting individuals such as President Bill Clinton and his wife, then Senator Hillary Clinton, President Thabo Mbeki and his wife, Zanele Mbeki, Senator Ted Kennedy and many leading business and social leaders.

My passion for being at the forefront of social change has seen my involvement in founding three non-profit organisations, the latest of which is a leading professional volunteering initiative that has helped bridge the skills and capacity gap between 25 under-resourced Gauteng schools, with more than 300 corporate volunteers since its inception five years ago. More recently, my wife and I returned from a three-year stint in Mainland China, where I received a Chinese government scholarship to study Mandarin at Shanghai University.

Currently, my job is finding and selecting up to 100 of Southern Africa's brightest young entrepreneurial talents for full university scholarships each year – offering support, mentoring and providing access to R1-billion in venture capital through the Allan Gray Orbis Foundation.

In all this, I owe my parents so much. Theirs was a tough life to give my sister and I every opportunity for success. My dad religiously came to each and every sports match and my mum ignited my entrepreneurial enthusiasm and curiosity.

But much credit must also go to my distinctive schooling experience – at a small, Catholic school in Port Elizabeth that many local residents remain unaware of. It was a different place, in that it fully embraced multi-racialism more than half a century ago. My class was as demographically diverse as our country is.

This was further supported by passionate teachers and an incredibly personalised learning environment. While it might not have reached the heights of academic and sporting prowess, this space gave my classmates and I the ability to confidently ask some of life's most important questions: what are the needs of the world, what I am passionate about, and where do these answers intersect?

It is here that the foundations for my and my ex-classmates' callings were laid.

*Julian Hewitt, 30, attended St Dominic's Priory and Trinity High School. He is happily married, and is father to a 10-month-old daughter.*



*Julian Hewitt and his 10-month-old daughter*

# Matric results 2009

Anne Baker

**CATHOLIC SCHOOLS CONTINUED** to do well in the 2009 Matric exams, achieving an 83.9% pass rate. This was 23.6% above the national pass rate, but 2.1% lower than the schools achieved last year. Between 2006 and 2008 Catholic schools maintained a steady 85% plus pass rate. While we can justifiably be proud of that our schools do achieve a higher pass rate, the drop does require a careful analysis of what is happening in the individual schools whose results have deteriorated. Schools write both the national and the Independent Examinations Board (IEB) examinations. Of a total of 7 587 learners at Catholic schools, 6 157 wrote the national exams and achieved a 79.2% pass. The 1 430 learners who took the IEB exam achieved a 99.8% pass, with 16 learners from our schools achieving a commendable pass. Catherine Paverd from De La Salle Holy Cross College in Johannesburg achieved 11 distinctions and was the highest achiever in the IEB examination. Sixteen other Catholic school learners achieved an outstanding or commendable pass.

At CBC Mount Edmund, head boy Lawrence de Jesus passed the national exam with nine distinctions. Learners from township and rural Catholic high schools achieved well above the national average. Two learners from Tsogo High School in the North West Province did very well: John Maubene received eight distinctions and Lesego Phateng seven. This school achieved a total of 51 distinctions and had a 99.2% pass rate.

At St Matthews High School in Soweto, 98 of the 101 learners achieved a Bachelor's pass. Siyabonga Maseko achieved six distinctions, with 100% for Mathematics and just missing a distinction for his seventh subject, scoring 79%. Maletsatsi Monanaetsi also achieved 100% for Mathematics and earned six distinctions.

*“There was a dramatic drop in some provinces, which was due to some previously excellent schools suffering an increase in failures.”*

Jared Devar and Carise Frank of Holy Family College, Durban, achieved nine and seven distinctions respectively. The school had 67 distinctions in total. Springfield Convent in the Western Cape was placed second in the province, with Megan Woodward placing sixth in the province.



Lawrence de Jesus

An analysis of the results shows that there was an improvement, albeit small, in matric results in the Free State, Gauteng, and KwaZulu-Natal provinces. There was a dramatic drop in some provinces, which was due to some previously excellent schools suffering an increase in failures. This is a challenge to all in the network to assist these schools to examine what happened and to immediately put into place an improvement plan. This must address not only Grade 12 needs, but other grades as well. Without a sound foundation, no child can be expected to succeed in high school.

Some Catholic schools have struggled with the new National

Senior Certificate in the same way that other public schools struggle. Schools report finding competent teachers in key subjects such as English, Mathematics, Science, Computers and Accounting a challenge, and this has adversely affected their results. A lack of resources also adds to their struggle.

The 20.6% difference in the pass rate between Catholic schools writing the independent and national exams is a further challenge to the network. How are we going to work together to assist struggling schools to bridge the gap? This year's CaSPA theme, Catholic Education, Quality Education: Doing our

*“Schools report finding competent teachers in key subjects such as English, Mathematics, Science, Computers and Accounting a challenge, and this has adversely affected their results.”*

Best for Every Child, is aimed at raising quality awareness in our schools. The new CaSPA publication, *Fully Alive*, aims to assist schools with quality improvement, but schools still need additional ongoing support from district offices and local CSOs and CIE personnel.

Our schools for learners with special needs did very well this year. Two schools in KwaZulu-Natal that serve these learners and write the state examination achieved very good results. KwaThintwa School had 10 learners who wrote the exam. Seven passed well and all passed English. The other three will all be able to write supplementary examinations. St Martin de Porres in Port Shepstone has learners with multiple disabilities. The teachers at this school put in many extra hours to prepare their learners for the examination and they achieved a 67% pass rate. Dominican Grimley in Cape Town, the only school in the Western Province offering Grade 12 exams to hard-of-hearing learners, achieved a 100% Bachelor pass rate. St Vincent School for the Deaf in Johannesburg also achieved a 100% pass rate.

In the midst of the analysis of Grade 12 examination results, it is important to remember the many teachers from Grade R to Grade 12 who laid good foundations for learners, which allowed them to pass. Catholic schools must not become complacent in their success, but strive to consistently offer the very best education to the children who come to our schools.



# Book reviews

## ***Building and Restoring Respectful Relationships in Schools: A Guide to Using Restorative Practice***

Richard Hendry (2009)  
Published by Routledge

**I**MPLEMENTING RESTORATIVE PRACTICE in schools can offer powerful and effective methods of promoting harmonious relationships and resolving conflict. Restorative practice helps disruptive pupils take responsibility for their actions, understand the consequences of their behaviour and apologise to others. Through a “whole-school” approach, teachers and managers can help all children build healthy and respectful relationships with peers and teachers.

*Building and Restoring Respectful Relationships in Schools* is a practical resource to help relieve the pressure on schools and education services by leading them to plan and implement restorative approaches in their day-to-day work. This innovative and informative book:

- Provides a comprehensive overview of the current range of restorative approaches in schools.
- Offers a clear framework and theoretical perspective for understanding the range of approaches.
- Gives practical examples and case studies to illustrate practice.
- Contains practical exercises and other useful resource materials.
- Is relevant to individual staff, as well as schools as a whole, and education services.



Richard Hendry offers a vision of how our schools could be, if we are willing to embrace a “way of being” that nurtures personal responsibility in a climate of mutual respect. In addition to showing teachers how to reduce disruption and develop good relationships, this book is about improving learning in schools and building skills for life. *Building and Restoring Respectful Relationships in Schools* is essential reading for all teachers, especially department and year heads, as well as principals, policymakers and researchers.

**“In addition to showing teachers how to reduce disruption and develop good relationships, this book is about improving learning in schools and building skills for life.”**

## ***Teaching Tough Kids: Simple and Proven Strategies for Student Success***

Mark Le Messurier (2009)  
Published by Routledge

**T**EACHING TOUGH KIDS delivers a refreshing collection of realistic ideas to sustain the organisational and behavioural transformations of all students, particularly those who “do it tough”, i.e. those who learn and react differently. They are complex kids who find life tougher than most. Managing their emotions and behaviours presents educators with a spectacular challenge in schools today, and their numbers are on the rise.

Filled with inspirational case studies, this book focuses on building improved relationships, structures and behaviours, rather than seeing the student as a problem that must be fixed. The value of promoting positive connections with students of all ages is highlighted, and the author presents ways to incorporate inclusive ideas into everyday practice.

**“Filled with inspirational case studies, this book focuses on building improved relationships, structures and behaviours, rather than seeing the student as a problem that must be fixed.”**

This stimulating book shows teachers how to:

- Build student “connectedness” to learning.
- Set achievable goals for each child.
- Support emotional stability.
- Strengthen organisation patterns.
- Address behavioural issues.
- Improve homework planning.
- Create friendships and deal with bullying.



*Teaching Tough Kids* puts a particularly close focus on students identified with learning disabilities such as Attention Deficit Disorder, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, Oppositional Defiant Disorder and Asperger’s Syndrome.

It also looks at another group of students, with executive functioning difficulties, who are emerging in schools. These are children who have endured neglect or too much stress and uncertainty in their lives and, as a result, display classic symptoms of hyperactivity, hypervigilance and impulsiveness.

Teachers will welcome *Teaching Tough Kids* as it approaches issues from a very practical perspective.