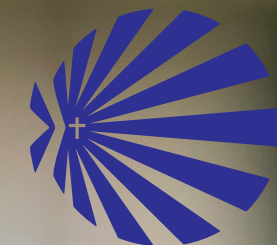


Catholic
Institute of
Education



Responding with hope

CIE Annual Report
2020





Responding with hope

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Responding with hope

Much has been said and written about what a different year 2020 was. In January, no-one could have known that there would be a total disruption to life as we know it through the COVID-19 pandemic. The closure of all schools and the total shutdown of the country in March called for different ways of thinking about our work with Catholic schools in South Africa.

The first concern was keeping communication alive, not only amongst CIE staff and the network but most importantly with our schools as well. The word that resonated amongst everyone was HOPE. How could we bring hope in the midst of closed schools and an anxious world.

The year began as usual with members of the Leadership Support Team attending Principals' forums in the provinces CIE serves. This connection with school leaders is an essential element of CIE's work as it enables principals to share their concerns and support each other as well as allowing CIE to outline and explain their programmes for the year.

In spite of the difficulties that the pandemic presented much was accomplished by CIE staff. Close contact was kept with the Catholic schools network and virtual meetings became an active way of reaching people. One of the major challenges was the ability of the network to begin implementing the directions from the 3rd National Catholic Schools Congress. In-person meetings took place in early 2020 and thereafter online meetings were used to plan and develop the national strategic plan. Sr Kathy Gaylor OP, chairperson of the Catholic Board of Education (CBE) sent a letter of support and encouragement to schools to assure them of the CBE's support.

Gathered at the Sierra Towers Hotel, Randburg, from 25 to 27 September 2019, the 3rd National Catholic Schools Congress discerned the following Vision and Directions forward:

Vision statement

In fidelity to Jesus Christ and the call of his Gospel, we celebrate the uniqueness of our schools' identity as part of the evangelising mission of the Church, honouring the past and welcoming the future.

We recognise our responsibility to contribute to the transformation of our country, towards a society fit for the children of God.

Direction Statement 1

Catholic Education Today and Tomorrow: Identity and Mission



Direction Statement 2

Religious Education: Educating the heart, mind and soul



Direction Statement 3

Liberating Education: the Catholic School response to the needs of the 21st Century



Direction Statement 4

Governing and Leading Catholic Schools towards tomorrow:
Ethics, stewardship, empowerment and collaborative practice



Direction Statement 5

Sustaining and Growing Catholic Schools Today and Tomorrow:
Ownership, advocacy and viable partnerships



Catholic Education Today and Tomorrow: Identity and Mission

Believing

that Jesus Christ and his Gospel are at the heart of the Catholic school, we honour the vision, faith and care of those who founded Catholic schools, and undertake to bring these forward. We strive to educate for the Common Good, by including all, cultivating reciprocal relationships, building unity in our network, and addressing prejudice and injustices

We commit to

The holistic education of our learners, grounded in the dignity of each person as created in the image of God - an education towards a meaningful and purposeful life, with a concern for justice and for the vulnerable, and where the integrity of creation is recognised and respected

We will do this by

Honouring the Catholic ethos by dedicating time to ongoing reflection, through the celebration of the Eucharist and other liturgies, prayer and meditation

Prioritising Religious Education, and the resources required for this

Ensuring that the school climate safeguards the dignity of all, and responding to violence in ways that are restorative and which build peace

Cultivating a commitment to social and environmental justice, including meaningful and relevant outreach

Advocating for equality, inclusion and justice in education and in the wider society

Caring for the vulnerable

Rigorous implementation and monitoring of the Child Safeguarding Policy

Ensuring that Governors understand and carry out their prime responsibility to uphold the ethos of the school, including support for Religious Education

Promoting and honouring the rights named in the Deed of Agreement and in the Constitutions of the Schools, including the distinctive religious character

Building greater commitment to collaboration and alignment across the network

Inviting further commitment and involvement from owners, teachers, parents, and learners

This area covers essential aspects of CIE work, namely the primary importance of the maintenance and development of the Catholic ethos in our Catholic schools, an ethos which respects the dignity of every member of the school community and which creates a culture of peace and justice. CIE's Regional Managers supported school leadership through personal visits at the beginning and end of 2020, and through virtual communication during lockdown. Many of these interactions focused on COVID-19 and the challenges this presented to the schools.

The Black Lives Matter movement enabled past and present pupils at several schools to voice their experiences of racism at their schools. The CBE President Bishop Jwara and Chairperson Sr Kathy Gaylor issued a statement on racism which was circulated to all sectors of the school community.

The COVID-19 pandemic called for action from the CIE. A COVID-19 plan was developed and implemented.

CIE's COVID-19 Response

Early during the lockdown a decision was taken that support structures needed to be set up. This involved regular phone calls and WhatsApp messages to CIE staff and school leaders. The use of Zoom, Teams and WhatsApp became essential tools in the important task of quality communication across all structures. Regular development meetings were also held.

An additional challenge which the network faced was helping to ensure that children had access to food. The contributions of funders enabled CIE to provide assistance to a number of feeding schemes at several schools, including the Sunday's River Valley schools.

A key aspect of keeping hope alive was a series of webinars offered by Dr Gloria Marsay, an educational psychologist, who facilitated a number of sessions for both Catholic school offices as well as sessions with school leaders. These sessions were entitled Hope for Schools and explored hope, self-care, spirituality and mastery. All Dr Marsay's sessions were well received.

The CIE printed posters for primary schools and high schools with messages on how to keep safe during COVID-19.

Nearly 30 000 masks were distributed to schools around the country as well as hundreds of litres of sanitiser and thermometers. CIE assisted six rural schools to obtain water tanks and effective sanitation.

Keeping schools informed on COVID-19 protocols and compliance was an essential aspect of the CIE response to which end the CIE developed a portal with resources on the CIE website to assist schools.

Education Access Programme

The Education Access Programme (EAP) supported 700 learners in 42 independent schools. This support included school fees, uniforms and food and the upgrading of school facilities. This programme made a significant contribution towards the lives of children who would not otherwise have had the opportunity to remain in school.



Posters designed and distributed by CIE for primary schools within our network

During an evaluation of the programme in September 2020, principals were asked to reflect on the impact of COVID-19 on their schools. Most of the EAP schools were already in a precarious financial situation prior to the pandemic which then significantly worsened their situations. The most serious impact was the drop in the payment of fees with many parents being retrenched or placed on furlough (reduced or delayed salary payments). This affected the schools' ability to pay salaries of staff and to run the school.

Funds from the Education Access Programme also ensured that food parcels reached the most vulnerable learners and their families.

Health screening

In 2020, CIE was able to continue the primary health screening programme. Grade R and 1 children in the Kokstad, Sundays River Valley regions and the Free State Province were screened for a variety of health issues. Immunisation status was also checked. The team treated minor ailments and fungal skin conditions onsite. Caregivers were addressed by professional nurses on the overall health of the children as well as offering basic health education. Children requiring additional medical attention were referred to opticians, dentists, doctors and other specialists.

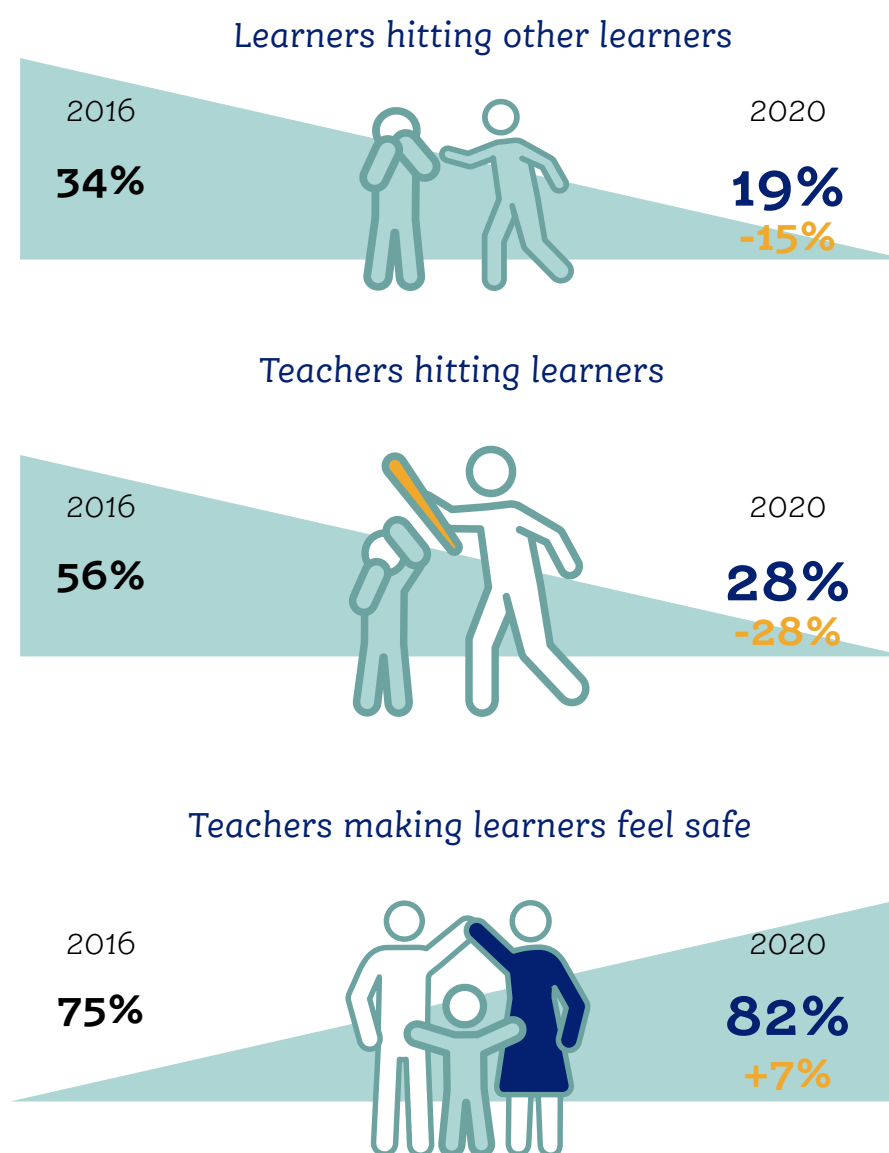
Child Safeguarding

While the pandemic greatly hampered work on Child Safeguarding in schools, especially the schools that the CIE works with in Lesotho and Swaziland, continued written and online communication was maintained with these schools. There was great concern about children's safety during lockdown and the Principals and Designated Child Safeguarding Persons (DCSP) were alerted to this through a letter reminding them that they may indeed need to have to deal with serious issues and to have referral contacts up-to-date for when they returned to school. Staff of the CIE and Catholic schools Offices Catholic schools attended two online meetings to discuss

and experience a workshop for the Designated Child Safeguarding Person (DCSP) aimed at assisting them to understand their role.

The CIE Thabiso Skills Institute identified the need to workshop and empower network skills centre staff on the Child Safeguarding policy in order to help protect the youth and vulnerable adults who attend courses at the centres.

School Climate Survey 5 year analysis



Building Peaceful Schools

The Building Peaceful Schools programme continued to help schools to move from punitive disciplinary procedures to restorative practices. The goal of the programme is to help schools build a culture of care, justice and peace - hallmarks of the Catholic school ethos. During 2020, the seventh year of the programme, implementation was adapted in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. After initial visits early in the year to administer the climate survey for learners and teachers, regional managers continued to provide virtual support. In the last term when regional managers were able to visit schools in person, feedback on the Climate Survey for Learners was given. This had the unintended effect of opening up a conversation with learners, teachers and school leaders around the psychosocial effects of COVID-19 on these communities. The school climate survey reports have greatly assisted principals and teachers to understand the children's view of their schools.

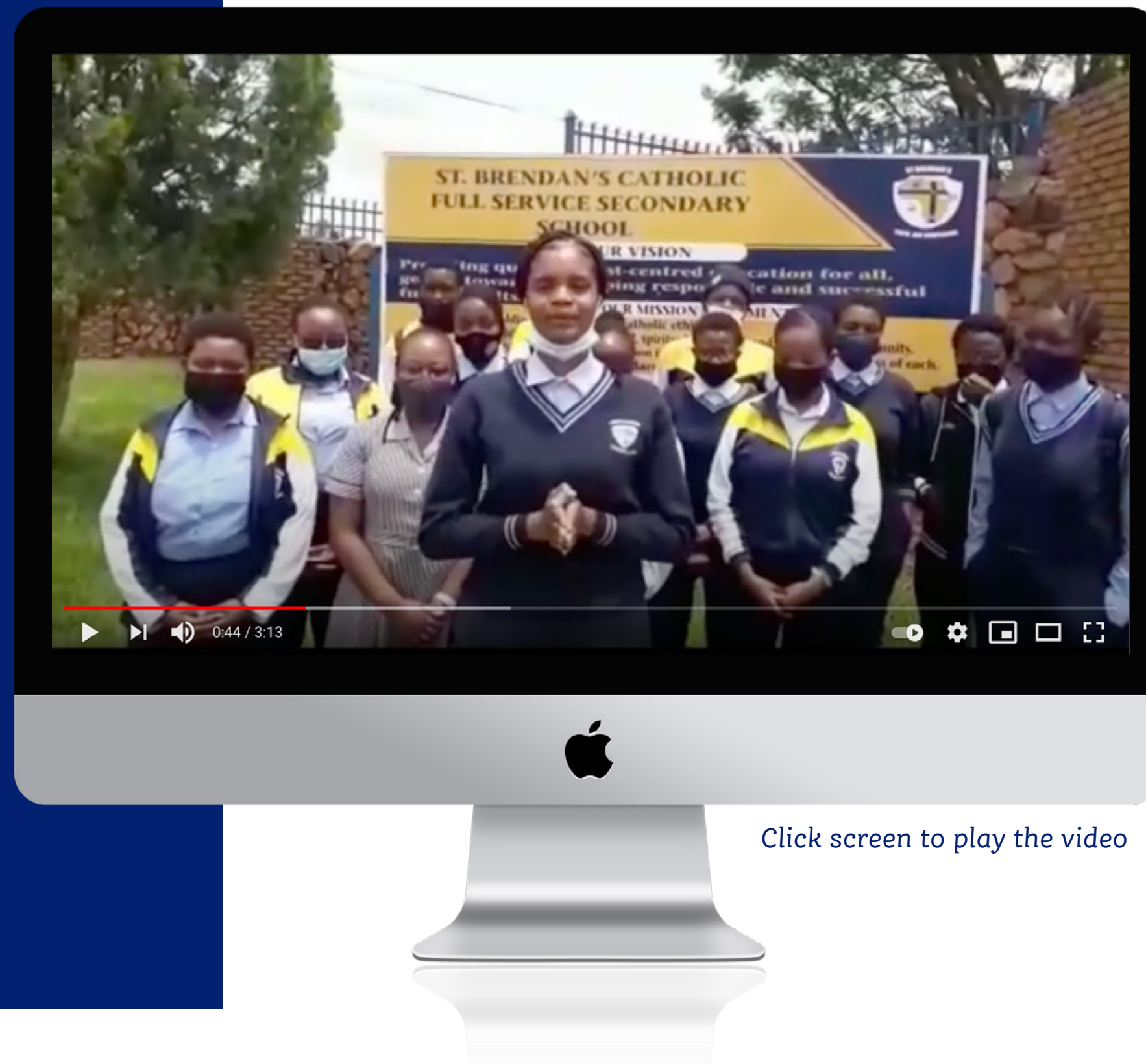
An analysis of the Climate Survey for Learners over a five-year period, indicated that:

- Learners hitting other learners had reduced from 34% in 2016 to 19% in 2020, variance of -15%.
- Teachers hitting learners had reduced from 56% in 2016 to 28% in 2020, variance of -28%.
- Teachers making learners feel safe had increased from 75% in 2016 to 82% in 2020, variance of +7%.

At a joint meeting of all Catholic service staff in November a guest speaker affirmed that the BPS programme was indeed part of a world-wide endeavour. It inspired the staff and gave them further insight into how peace in schools is possible. Unpacking the results of the data from the learners' and educators' climate surveys allowed participants to understand how the correct feedback to schools needed to be given. Key messages of BPS were shared and discussed in order to enable staff to put out congruent messages.

Peer Mediators

Peer Mediation, an essential aspect of the BPS Programme, continued to be popular with participants. Run together with Peer Education, these child-led projects benefit both the learners who participate in them and the schools involved. Grade 9s are trained to present five Life Skills lessons to Grade 8s and to think about possible outreach projects. During Grade 10 these learners are trained as peer mediators so that when they enter Grade 11, they become peer mediators who advocate for peace in their schools and assist in resolving low-level conflict amongst their peers. In October, CIE interviewed peer mediators from three schools during which they showed great passion and excitement for the programme. It was clear that the learners involved were aware of the importance of what they were doing in helping others and in developing skills in conflict management and that they appreciated these valuable life skills.



Click screen to play the video



Religious Education: Educating the heart, mind and soul

Believing

that Religious Education permeates all aspects of the School's life, is at the heart of the curriculum, and gives learners the opportunity to learn about and encounter God;

that the principal, supported by the staff, is the spiritual leader of the school

We commit to

A Religious Education which is faithful to the Catholic tradition, is aligned with Fostering Hope, open to all, and which offers learners clear relevant programmes for each grade across the school, within a safe, reflective and contemplative environment that responds to their contexts and experiences

We will do this by

Assisting Governors, Principals, Religious Education Coordinators and School Management Teams to prioritise that Religious Education, as a subject distinct from Life Orientation, is timetabled, resourced, staffed, and managed

Developing the shared understanding that the formal RE programme, together with prayer, liturgy, social / environmental justice, and outreach, inform the ethos of the school

Requiring ongoing formation that will renew and strengthen the teaching and learning of Religious Education as a core subject, including a responsive awareness of our learners' contexts, identities, capacities and vulnerabilities

Conceptualising Religious Education and its place in the curriculum as required by NCBE policy

Utilising our Religious Education resources, and developing further contextual relevant resources

Selection procedures that give appropriate and specific emphasis to upholding the school's ethos and possible teaching of Religious Education

Identifying suitable Religious Education Coordinators and appointing them to the School Management Team

Advocating within our structures, to the DBE and the wider education community, for Religious Education's essential and non-negotiable role in Catholic Schools

The CBE Religious Education Reference Committee met several times during lockdown. A major concern was that when schools reopened Religious Education would be side-lined as schools tried to catch up with the curriculum. **A letter** which aimed to encourage and support the schools and their ethos and Religious Education during this stressful time was sent to schools as it was felt that RE should not become pressurised but that spiritual support was necessary.

Other materials disseminated were on the Season of Creation, Bible Month and the digital magazine Roots and Wings which was distributed to all members of the professional society.

The most exciting aspect of Religious Education during 2020 was the registration of the new Advanced Certificate for Religious Education by the TEEC which was developed in partnership with CIE and which will greatly assist in the professionalisation of Religious Education.



Click screen to play the video

Liberating Education: the Catholic School response to the needs of the 21st Century

Believing

that local, community and global concerns impel us to change our approach to education by striving “to promote a new way of thinking about human beings, life, society and our relationship with nature”, Laudato ‘Si’, 215;

and that our children and their teachers are open to the exploration of different ways of educating and learning together

We commit to

welcoming appropriate change;

holding a happy equilibrium between the best of what we currently have, and the required values of deep thought and reflection, responsibility, creativity, compassionate care, inclusivity, environmental awareness and solidarity for the Common Good; acknowledging the role of the educator in facilitating the acquisition of 21st Century skills

We will do this by

The development, in harmony with our ethos, of appropriate learner-centred initiatives, materials and programmes

Environmental education, advocacy, action and rolemodelling

Promoting the ethical and appropriate use of technology together

Effective collaboration, training and sharing of current and future skills

Using and developing the curriculum towards employability, appropriate self-reliance and environmental responsibility

Lobbying to effect necessary change in the curriculum



A major concern during school lockdown was the increasingly obvious disparity between the well-resourced schools with the ability to offer on-line lessons and those without. This further exacerbates the divide which already exists in the Catholic school network and indeed the country. In an effort to provide some form of support a COVID-19 portal was developed on the CIE.

Teaching and Learning

CIE implemented a literacy project for Grades R-4 in five schools in the Sundays River Valley. As with other programmes, due to the Level 5 lockdown in March 2020, this programme was halted. The schools were unable to carry out online education and as a result, once schools reopened in August, CIE was unable to measure any improvement in the children's reading and comprehension skills. However, a variety of literacy interventions were encouraged: classroom libraries; book corner; and extra reading time in the mornings for individual children. When the schools reopened in August 2020, the CIE fieldworker gave extra reading lessons to children who struggled to read and advanced reading stimulation to children who read well.

CIE school improvement specialists continue to work in schools not related to the Catholic network through various partnerships. The objective of this work is to improve learning outcomes in selected schools. In Limpopo and the North West, CIE is a service provider for numeracy in the foundation phase of the Anglo-American Education project in 40 schools and over 5000 learners participate in reading clubs that are supported by the Blouberg Reading for Enjoyment Project.

CIE Thabiso Skills Institute

As with most of South Africa 2020 was a difficult year for the twenty-two CIE-Thabiso Skills Institute Network centres. In spite of the pandemic and the consequent lockdown, the skills centres have survived and are slowly recovering.

In 2020, CIE assisted skills centres to comply with the Disaster Management Act to ensure that they were able to continue with training. The CIE-Thabiso Skills Institute team provided virtual support to centre managers.

The CIE also channelled funding from the National Skills Fund to skills centres for training - which included a new sanitisation programme - of 1100 unemployed youth.

In March 2020, Khulisa Management Services conducted an independent evaluation of the CIE's Life Skills Programme. The findings emphasised the relevance of the Life Skills Programme in meeting the participants' psychosocial developmental needs and how instrumental it is in setting the platform for young people to pursue sustainable livelihoods that not only benefit their immediate families but communities at large.

The CIE's Life Skills Programme was adopted by Don Bosco Tech Africa to be implemented in Technical and Vocational Education Training (TVET) Centres in 15 countries across Africa. The manual has subsequently been translated into French, Portuguese and Spanish. During lockdown, CIE included a new component to the Life Skills curriculum that covered education around the COVID-19 virus and a module on Gender Based Violence.

Core funding partners of this work include JP Morgan and DG Murray Trust.



Governing and Leading Catholic Schools towards tomorrow.

Ethics, stewardship, empowerment and collaborative practice.

Believing

In the value of ethical, accountable, collaborative, accessible governance and leadership, informed by the spirit of service;

that Ownership, Governance and Leadership, while distinct in their roles, are all key to sustainability;

that in the Catholic School, Governance is in the service of mission (rather than market or tradition)

We commit to

Schools of excellence that are led and governed ethically and effectively, with active commitment to the Catholic ethos;

where Governors and Leaders are empowered with the necessary skills and knowledge, reaching out in care and prepared to protect the wellbeing of children

We will do this by

Induction and formation, including spiritual formation, recognising that ethos is at the heart of this ministry

Strengthening and sharing sound practice in Governance and Leadership

Training especially in the provisions of the Deed of Agreement and of the Constitutions of the Schools, and in staff selection

Exploring creative ways of making Governance more accountable, accessible and effective

Purposeful monitoring and evaluation by mandated structures



School Leadership Support

Regional Managers continued to engage in one-on-one support conversations with principals through virtual means. CIE also worked with principals' forums in all six regions. Principals' forums aim to be communities of practice, of collaborative problem solving and peer support. Much of the support during the pandemic focused on psychosocial support of the school leaders who in turn have supported their teachers.

In partnership with Bridge, Mathew Goniwe School of Leadership and Governance and Sasol, three 'Principals Upfront' seminars took place virtually. CIE presented one of these on school safety and restorative practices to over 60 participants.

Working with Governors

The main purpose of training members of Boards of Governors and School Governing Bodies is to enable them to feel confident in their role, which includes oversight and guardianship. In Catholic schools, governance includes upholding the ethos of the school, ensuring that the Child Safeguarding policy is implemented fully and that the school buildings and grounds are properly maintained.



Child Safeguarding workshop in Lesotho



COVID-19 protocols being carried out





Sustaining and Growing Catholic Schools Today and Tomorrow.

Ownership, advocacy and viable partnerships.

Believing

that Catholic Schools are called to be beacons of hope and places of connection between home, church and community, we are convinced of the value of these schools

We commit to

strengthening our ethos and distinctive Catholic character, especially with regard to service, inclusivity, and a particular care for the vulnerable;

transforming our schools in all diverse ways necessary, re-aligning them in response to the needs of 21st Century South Africa;

respectfully holding the Department of Education and Catholic structures, by strong advocacy, to their respective responsibilities

We will do this by

Firmly acknowledging Christ at the centre of each school

Collaborative partnerships, and sharing resources through common structures such as the NCBE

The formation of skilled Governors and Leaders as an essential element of sustainability

Putting in place systems for shared centralised services, in order to optimise resources

Finding and using places where the voices, needs, and aspirations of Catholic Education can be heard

Exploring and sharing new and/or alternative ownership models

Exploring the founding of new schools where the need is most urgent

Identifying which needs can be responded to, and how, by sharing and collaboration

Network and Advocacy

The CIE continued to meet with many network partners albeit virtually after March. The Catholic schools network was a main focus. Virtual meetings included developing the Catholic Board of Education's strategic plan, Religious Education, Child Safeguarding and ongoing development for staff. Understanding State of Emergency requirements for schools was a further focus of meetings.

The CIE's policy and advocacy team played a key role in lobbying for the interests of independent and public schools. Numerous consultation meetings with the Department of Basic Education (DBE) took place largely as part of the National Alliance of Independent Schools Associations (NAISA). These consultations focused on the COVID-19 legal safety requirements for the reopening of schools and the impact of non-payment of school fees by parents on independent schools. The latter led to the Minister of Basic Education making relief funds available for subsidised independent schools. Schools were kept informed through Policy Briefs. Boarding School guidelines to assist boarding schools to open and remain safe were developed and disseminated.

Collaborative partnerships are a key objective of the CIE. These include the Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference (SACBC), regional Catholic Boards of Education and regional offices, and Provincial Education Departments, including district and circuit officials. These partnerships have been established to share information and advocate for issues relevant to schools in each region. Further partnerships with Civil society include Bridge, Harambee, NECT, Molteno Institute for Languages, NASCEE, NBI, ClassAct and Book Dash to name a few.

CIE continues its active participation with the International Catholic Education Office (OEIC). South Africa was a participant in a number of global surveys and also featured in an international book on the Global Compact for Education.

Sustainability

During 2019, the CIE became increasingly aware of the vulnerability of low-fee independent schools to remain sustainable. In response to this CIE established a Centralised Services Department that will use economies of scale to procure quality goods and services at reasonable prices for the network. As part of this initiative, CIE's finance department began offering financial services to assist low-fee independent schools with their financial compliance. These services ensured that independent schools retained their subsidies from the Gauteng Department of Education. In 2020, through the new Centralised Services Department, low-fee independent schools were provided with Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) to the value of R750,000 as well as 10 000L of sanitiser, through a donation received by the CIE.



School feeding scheme during lockdown

Monitoring and Evaluation

The CIE established a Monitoring and Evaluation unit in order to improve the delivery of our work through the gathering of data and action reflection. Over the course of 2020, the challenges faced in doing work in schools and skills centres were also felt in our Monitoring and Evaluation. With so much work happening at a distance, it was an opportunity for our reporting systems to innovate - we co-created a lockdown reporting system that included contact with schools, zoom meetings with government and other NGOs, and formation at a distance. Data analysis and synthesis were not hampered by lockdown, and so much time was spent looking closely at the patterns in data in order to prepare for 2021. In particular, virtual processes with CIE staff and the schools resulted in Ecosystems Maps for the network. Each school is a part of a complex system. Understanding that system allows the school and CIE to respond more effectively to the school's needs. A further project was the development of a Communications and Key Messaging Pack for our Building Peaceful Schools programme.

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