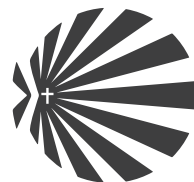


SIGNS

OF GOD'S PRESENCE

*Appraising the distinctive religious
character of the Catholic school*

National
Catholic
Board of
Education



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Foreword

Appraising the distinctive religious character of the Catholic school

Scripture overflows with signs and symbols of God's presence among us – the fire and cloud of Exodus, the down-to-earth sacramentals of the New Testament:

'I am the light of the world' Jn. 8:12

'You are the light of the world' Matt. 5:14

'If salt loses its taste, what will make it salty again?' Matt. 5:13

'I am the Bread of Life' Jn. 6:35

These signs speak to us of the search for the truth, of the challenge to be real, and to be unafraid, to be salty. They challenge us to the generosity of sharing our bread, and of sharing and growing what is good and healing within our communities.

The Third Catholic Schools' Congress placed great emphasis on the religious identity of our schools: this manifested itself in the rich preparation, in the Congress itself, and in all the work done across South Africa since then at local, regional and national levels, towards the sustenance and development of this special characteristic of our schools. Over the past months we have been groping in the shadow of the COVID 19 pandemic and economic and socio-political uncertainty. We are now emerging, reclaiming the clear understanding that our schools are an integral part of the mission of the Church to bring the Good News of Jesus Christ – places where children learn to know God better, and where they are secure in the knowledge that God loves each one.

The context in which we live, work and minister can be a violent and unforgiving place. Schools can be – should be – seedbeds of healing, peace, and the building of honest and happy relationships. We have the responsibility to sow these seeds, nurture their growing, and to keep honestly reviewing whether we are honouring this call. Hence this instrument. The quality of our schools' ethos *matters*: for our children, for our school communities, for South Africa and for our world.

Where we encounter anxiety and a sense of powerlessness, we are to be people of hope, communities of hope. Without that which gives foundation to our hope, we cannot carry out our mission – the call to reconciliation and transformation reminds us that our South Africa needs us, to give of ourselves and be part of creating change for the good of all and all creation.

We are necessarily committed to the demands of assessment in the ordinary curriculum of the school, and even more so is it essential for us to assess and evaluate how we are, and where we are as a school community in terms of this ethos and our Catholic identity. Each school has the responsibility to clarify its vision, and actively and unapologetically celebrate its religious identity.

A school community is a living organism – constantly changing and growing. So while this document of appraisal of the distinctive religious character of the Catholic school is intended to help us review, affirm, and if necessary improve our ethos, the title has a simpler, even more substantial significance. Our schools are themselves to be signs of God's presence: lights in our world, salt in our experience, bread to the hungry, a hand to the marginalised. Just as our faith cannot be taken for granted, so neither can our identity as Catholic schools. We ask you to take this tool, and use it well, for the sake of our children and for the sake of the good news that our school communities are intended to be.

Sr Kathy Gaylor OP

Chairperson: National Catholic Board of Education
December 2021

Appraising the Ethos of the Catholic School

Introduction

The National Catholic Board of Education (CBE) requires each Catholic school – whether an independent school or a public school on private property – to undertake an annual appraisal of its distinctive Catholic ethos. In this way, staff, together with learners and parents, the School Governing Body or Board, and the Owners or Religious Organisations, can develop an awareness of their school's distinctive religious character and the way it is given expression in the life of the school. Three statements, each with a set of indicators, guide this process by drawing attention to institutional arrangements, relationships, policy, curriculum, programmes, and practices in the school. By considering the life of the school in relation to these statements and indicators, the school can identify:

- areas of strength, and affirm these
- areas of concern where improvement is needed
- steps by which improvements are to be made.

The appraisal process is intended to help the school community to be mindful of its ethos, and to find ways to uphold and strengthen it. It does not provide a basis for comparison between schools; it simply asks that each school strives to be the best that it can be.

Setting up the Ethos Committee

The first step is to set up an Ethos Committee as a sub-committee of the School Governing Body or Board of Governors. Its composition and way of working needs to take account of this location within the overall governance structure of the school.

Thus:

- The Ethos Committee needs to be chaired by a member of the School Governing Body or Board of Governors. This can be the Principal.
- The Owner must be represented on the Ethos Committee, directly or by a delegated representative.
- Where the school has a Religious Education Coordinator, and whether this person is a member of the School Management/Leadership Team or not, this person should be a member of the Ethos Committee.
- In addition, the Ethos Committee should include at least one member of the School Management Team/Leadership Team. This person could be a Deputy Principal or Head of Department.

In addition to these three or four members, the School Governing Body or Board of Governors may wish to include further persons, perhaps to bring a larger perspective to the committee, or to allow a participant to gain experience of the process and its implications for the school. This could be a parent or a member of staff. High schools could consider having a learner on the committee, too.

However, it is likely that many schools will have smaller, rather than larger, Ethos Committees. This is mostly because of the Committee's location in the governance structure of the school. Smaller schools will face constraints on how many members an Ethos Committee might realistically have. It may even be that the School Governing Body or Board of Governors, together with a School Management Team/School Leadership Team, will need to consider

how to place this area of work into the portfolio of a particular member of staff. Practical arrangements are fine, so long as the principal retains responsibility for reporting to the School Governing Body or Board of Governors.

Preparing for the appraisal

Members of the Ethos Committee should prepare themselves for carrying out the appraisal. Reading through this document is a good place to start – and it can be helpful for members to reacquaint themselves with sections such as the Glossary and ‘The distinctive religious character of the Catholic school’ (Appendix 3). Preparation will also include reading through a previous report, noting any changes in the national education policy space, checking on steps included in the School Development Plan, and being aware of when to expect the next external Religious Education Validation. These questions might guide initial discussion by the Ethos Committee:

- Have any developments in national education policy, particularly with regard to the National Curriculum, Life Orientation and Religion Education (RE), and Religious Observance, taken place that need to be noted? Do these have any implications for school policies, or the way your school balances its responsibilities to the national curriculum, Life Orientation, and Religious Education?
- Have individual learners and their parents asked the school to make special arrangements with regard to individual religious freedom and freedom of conscience? If so, what arrangements have been agreed on?
- What plans are in place for the Religious Education Coordinator and the Religious Education Department to review aspects of the school’s Religious Education?
- Can the RE Department show examples of learners’ work that:
 - indicate RE lessons are life-centred and experiential?
 - allow those from different religious traditions to participate in class activities in ways that nurture their own spiritual development?
 - critically and imaginatively cover issues relating to citizenship, society, and care for the Earth?
- Is the school’s assembly and liturgical calendar planned with attention to the liturgical year and contemporary relevance? Are days of significance to all members of the school community included? Can instances of this be identified?

Focus of the appraisal

The appraisal process takes account of the four characteristics outlined in ‘The distinctive religious character of the Catholic school’ (see Appendix 3, 2.2) that shape the life and ethos of the Catholic school:

- the religious dimension of the school’s life
- religious education according to the broad Catholic approach
- harmony with the values of the Catholic Church
- an understanding with each member of the school community.

These characteristics are appraised by considering three statements, each of which is accompanied by a set of indicators. These statements are:

Statement 1: Ethos

The Catholic school works to uphold, develop, and celebrate its distinctive religious character in all aspects of school life.

Statement 2: Policies and Plans

The Catholic school ensures that its policies, procedures, and development plans are in line with, and give effect to, its distinctive religious character.

Statement 3: Religious Education

The Catholic school offers a substantial, coherent, and academic Religious Education.

Each statement and its indicators are to help those who carry out the appraisal identify signs of the health of the spirituality of the school. They provide an opportunity for the school community to develop a sustainable Catholic ethos and spirituality, and to consider how this can improve the quality of education on offer.

For Statements 1 and 2 the Ethos Committee can begin to assess the quality of the school by grading each indicator as follows:

4	very good	We’re about as good as we can get in this area
3	good	We’re good, but we can still improve in this area
2	fair	There are a number of things that still need to be put right in this area
1	unsatisfactory	There are important aspects of this area that we are not getting right yet

Carrying out the appraisal

When the Ethos Committee begins its annual appraisal process it still has an important decision to make. It is best to cover all three statements but schools must decide to review at least one statement each year. And, once the cycle of regular appraisal is underway, the Committee will begin its appraisal on its chosen focus on one or more statements, while it monitors the ongoing implementation of its previously worked out and agreed on plan.

The following steps are required to start the appraisal process and to make sure that it is integrated into the overall governance of the school. Thus, the Ethos Committee:

Prepares for, and begins, the new appraisal

- Considers South African context, current practice in the school and looks over this document
- Decides on the focus for the present year
- Meets to review the statements under consideration, and records joint responses to the indicators on the relevant planning page, and collects evidence of these – particularly for Statement 3 which covers academic RE at the school. This documentation needs to be kept for comparison from year to year, and to inform the next cycle of appraisal.
- Drafts a report, including an action plan, to build on strengths and to address the weaknesses identified in relation to each statement.

Elicits comment and finalises the draft appraisal report

- The draft report, and action plan is taken to various forums for discussion. In this way, valuable feedback can be obtained and support for the proposed plan gained. The success of any programme is likely to be determined by the level of support it can generate. Constituencies in the school whose views should be elicited include:
 - Cleaning and administrative staff
 - Teaching staff, including teachers of RE
 - learners and parents
 - the Owner, directly or through a delegated representative – one of the members of the Ethos Committee
 - the School Governing Body or Board of Governors – perhaps when the Ethos Committee is established or tasked with beginning its work, and again when the report is presented, by the Principal, to this body.
- The Ethos Committee revises its draft report and plan in the light of comments received.

Tables the appraisal report – at Staff Meeting, then a Meeting of SGB/BOG

- The Ethos Committee presents its report and action plan to a school staff meeting and, subsequently, to a meeting of the School Governing Body or Board of Governors.
- The School Governing Body or Board of Governors, along with Owner or their representative, give their minuted approval to the plan.
- A copy of this report and action plan is lodged annually with the regional Catholic Schools Office and, in the case of a public school on private property, with the Provincial MEC for Education.

Monitors the implementation of the current plan

- The SMT/School Leadership Team, and staff, proceeds with the implementation of the plan. (Ideally, this plan is integrated into the School Development Plan.)
- The Ethos Committee monitors the implementation of the plan and provides a progress report on this (at least once prior to the submission of a new report and plan) at staff meetings and to meetings of the School Governing Body or Board of Governors. In both school and governing structure Ethos should be a standing item on the agenda. And current developments and progress around implementation should happen as often as the number of meetings allow.
- The Ethos Committee begins work on the next statement in the appraisal cycle.
- The monitoring of the current plan takes place at the same time as the new appraisal process is being carried out.

Statement 1: Ethos

The Catholic School works to uphold, develop, and celebrate its distinctive religious character in all aspects of school life.

Indicator The school...	Rating	What need to be done? and/or How will it be done?	Who will do it?	When will it be done?
1.1 Makes visible its Catholic identity through the presence of various signs and symbols.				
1.2 Encourages a love for, and invites commitment to Jesus Christ and the Gospel message of love, peace, and justice.				
1.3 Cultivates a community based on hospitality, love, and care for each individual.				
1.4 Models love, justice, and freedom in relationships between all members of the school community.				
1.5 Promotes the spiritual growth of the school community through appropriate acts of religious observance such as prayer, assembly, Eucharist, paralyurgy, retreat, and – where available – the work of the chaplaincy. (These events are planned with attention to the liturgical calendar and contemporary relevance.)				
1.6 Celebrates its religious diversity through activities important to the members of its community and allows those from different religious traditions to participate in ways that will nurture their own spiritual development.				
1.7 Recognises the sacramentality of all Creation and implements local practices of care for the Earth, our common home.				
1.8 Serves its community and wider society with integrity, a concern for the common good, and an active commitment to the poor and marginalised.				
1.9 Supports the work of the Catholic Church and its leaders, the local bishops and the Holy Father.				
1.10 Fosters its relationship with its parish and with its owner (the bishop, religious congregation, or trust).				
1.12 Embraces the Charism of its founder / founding religious congregation.				
1.13 Recognises its own location and story is marked by colonialism, segregation, and inequality, and resolves to strengthen its work of healing, reconciliation, and redress.				

Statement 2: Policies and Plans

The Catholic school ensures that its policies, procedures, and development plans are in line with, and give effect to, its distinctive religious character.

Indicator	Rating	What need to be done? and/ or How will it be done?	Who will do it?	When will it be done?
2.1 The School Governing Body or Board of Governors' Constitution and the school's Mission Statement upholds and promotes a distinctive Catholic character.				
2.2 Codes of conduct for staff and learners uphold restorative justice principles.				
2.3 Policy for Religious Education, based on Fostering Hope, covers academic RE, pastoral care, religious observance (i.e. assemblies and masses, liturgy and paraliturgy, and prayer), and co-curricular activities.				
2.4 The Child Safeguarding Policy approved by the National Catholic Board of Education is adopted.				
2.5 Sexuality Education policy, developed within the framework of Catholic Church teaching on sexuality, makes provision for ongoing HIV/AIDS education.				
2.6 Induction and further in-service training provided for all school employees develops their understanding and commitment to the school's distinctive Catholic character.				
2.7 A legal disciplinary procedure is in place that includes measures to deal with behaviour by a learner or staff member of the school that damages or undermines the school's distinctive Catholic character.				
2.8 Employment procedures take employment equity and the Catholic character of the school into account.				
2.9 All policies, procedures, and development plans are reviewed systematically and regularly.				

Statement 3: Religious Education

The Catholic School offers a substantial, coherent and academic Religious Education.

Indicator	yes	partial	no	Evidence and explanatory note or comment
3.1 An RE Coordinator is appointed to ensure the implementation of the RE policy. <i>[Their name; copy of a report]</i>				
3.2 RE appears on the school timetable. <i>[Number of periods per grade; duration of each period]</i>				
3.3 Staff members are allocated to teach RE. <i>[List who teaches each grade]</i>				
3.4 Staff members teach RE on a regular basis. <i>[Sample of learner work for particular grades]</i>				
3.5 Adequate time is given to the academic RE curriculum. (This should be at least 2 hours per week.) <i>[Total time allocation per week to RE for each grade]</i>				
3.6 RE teachers meet as a department, plan a coordinated delivery of the school's RE curriculum, and report-back and reflect on the progress of lessons. <i>[Meeting minutes; an agreed plan]</i>				
3.7 The RE Curriculum is supported across the school with appropriate, graded, and helpful materials for teachers and students, e.g. Lifebound and CORD. <i>[Sample of materials used]</i>				
3.8 RE Teachers are encouraged – and, where possible, offered assistance – by the school to participate in ongoing professional development. <i>[Networking with RE teachers from other Catholic schools; participation in RE workshops; enrolment in (academic) courses that promote quality professional teaching of RE; membership of the Professional Society of Religious Educators]</i>				

Indicator	yes	partial	no	Evidence and explanatory note or comment
3.9 The RE Curriculum is based on Fostering Hope. <i>[Teacher term plans reflecting a variety of processes – see Fostering Hope, Appendix 1]</i>				
3.10 RE is life-centred and promotes religious exploration and practice. <i>[Sample of lesson plans; lesson observations]</i>				
3.11 RE allows those from different religious traditions to participate in ways that will nurture their own spiritual development. <i>[Sample of lesson plans; lesson observations]</i>				
3.12 RE promotes personal growth, moral formation, and responsible citizenship. <i>[Sample of lesson plans; lesson observations]</i>				
3.13 RE develops ethical, critical, and imaginative thinking on matters of ecological and social concern. <i>[Sample of lesson plans; lesson observations]</i>				
3.14 RE is regularly appraised and open to external validation. <i>[Copy of Statement 3 appraisal report; copy of previous validation]</i>				
3.15 The RE Coordinator submits a report to the SMT and Ethos Committee once per term. <i>[Copy of a report]</i>				
3.16 Parents are informed about relevant aspects of the school's Religious Education. <i>[Copy of communication – such as letters or emails – to parents]</i>				
3.17 RE is assessed in an appropriate manner and is clearly reflected on students' report cards. <i>[A report card; samples of learners' report cards]</i>				

These appendices provide the reader with:

- background on how this document came about
- guidance on the role of the Religious Education Coordinator at the school, and
- a detailed description of the distinctive religious character of the Catholic school.

Appendix 1: A background note to Signs of God's Presence

Signs of God's Presence was originally published as the *Instrument for appraising the religious character of the Catholic School*. This document was developed by the CIE for CaSPA (Catholic Schools Proprietors' Association) to enable all Catholic schools to appraise their distinctive religious character. The design of the document was guided by the provision in the deed of agreement according to the South African Schools Act (84 of 1996) that allows public schools on private property to safeguard their religious character. In addition to the required deed, Catholic schools also enter an agreement between the Owner and the Governing Body.

The two agreements are as follows:

- The agreement between the Provincial MEC for Education and the Owner in terms of sections 14(1) and 57 of the South African Schools Act that this school is a public school on private property with a distinctive religious character as described in 'The distinctive religious character of the Catholic school' (see appendix 3).
- The agreement between the Owner and the Governing Body.

In terms of these agreements, the public school on private property is required to appraise its religious character each year. This appraisal enables the school and its owner to show that they are responsibly upholding their side of the agreement with the MEC for Education in their province. Likewise, the Owner and Governing Body are also held accountable to each other in terms of the agreement between them.

Independent schools are obliged by their owner and their constitutions to maintain and develop their distinctive Catholic character. They are accountable to their owner to do this.

The National Catholic Board of Education, the structure succeeding CaSPA, has since reaffirmed this requirement that ALL Catholic schools conduct an annual appraisal of their ethos.

Appendix 2: Coordinating the Religious Education Programme

Coordinating Religious Education in the Catholic school depends on differing school contexts. Some schools operate with a single dedicated RE teacher, others have various staff members working as a team. A few schools have chaplains who would make contributions to the school's religious life. The term 'RE Coordinator' can be used to describe the person responsible for holding together and fostering all the activities that make up the school's Religious Education.

The following list of ideas is useful for the Board of Governors or School Governing Body and School Management Team in raising awareness of the wide range of concerns that make up the coordinating function for RE. The aspects that form part of the job description of the school's RE Coordinator would depend, as indicated above, on the tasks allocated to other members of staff.

The task of the RE Coordinator might include:

Religious character

- coordinating the planning of special liturgical feasts and celebrations
- arranging and/or planning retreats or prayer groups for staff, learners and parents
- playing a key role in the development of the school's pastoral care programme
- attending to the environment and atmosphere of each classroom
- being a member of the Ethos Committee
- coordinating, on behalf of the Owner and the Principal, an annual appraisal of the school's religious character

Policy and practice

- coordinating the development of the school's RE policy based on *Fostering Hope*
- attending workshops and conferences and communicating their outcomes to the RE team
- animating and assisting RE teachers
- reading in order to keep abreast of developments in RE

Curriculum

- acquiring an overall view of the RE curriculum
- attending workshops/conferences and communicating outcomes to the RE team
- ensuring the coordination of the RE Programme
- convening regular meetings of the RE team
- liaising closely with liturgical singing in the school
- maintaining close links with the teachers of Life Orientation

Resources

- collecting suitable religious material for the school magazine and newsletters
- looking out for suitable TV programmes
- compiling suitable reading lists for teachers and students
- keeping library and resource centre well provided

Learners

- getting to know each RE class
- interviewing learners on a regular basis
- being involved with spiritual groups and projects
- ensuring that pastoral care arrangements are in place

Parents

- sending an RE newsletter to parents, perhaps once a term
- involving parents in prayer groups, discussion sessions and information days
- ensuring and supervising contact between RE teachers and parents through meetings and circulars

Leadership and management

- liaising with the principal, the School Management Team and the Board of Governors or School Governing Body
- cueing the principal about opportunities in the calendar for liturgy, paraliturgy, assembly
- planning with the principal a basic programme for the year's celebrations in and by the school
- being available to be consulted by the principal on decisions involving the school's profession of Gospel values
- bringing needs, issues and suggestions to management where appropriate

Religious communities

- liaising with the learners' parishes about the school's parallel work with sacramental preparation
- liaising with the local parish about how the school can participate in the life of the parish
- liaising with the parish priest about his presence and visibility in the school
- liaising with the leaders of the religious communities from which the learners come

Appendix 3: The distinctive religious character of the Catholic school

1. Description of the Catholic school

A Catholic school is a school community, recognised by the local Bishop, which through its general programme of education and especially its Religious Education classes and religious practices, exercises the right to live and learn the values of Jesus Christ, as upheld by the Catholic Church. Such a school provides this values-based education for the Catholic community as well as for those from the wider community who seek an education in harmony with the aims of the school.

1.1 The Catholic school aims to:

- provide a challenging educational environment which integrates faith and culture;
- promote the holistic growth of all learners;
- give active witness to social concern and care for others.

1.2 The Catholic school achieves this through:

- promoting a Catholic perspective of human life;
- a holistic approach to life;
- nurturing religious and moral formation;
- the dedication of the principal and staff to practising and promoting moral values and to a high standard of teaching and learning.

1.3 The Catholic school strives towards:

- excellence in education, with outcomes embracing the total formation of each individual, and involving a passion for the ministry of educating;
- preparing learners to take their place in society as responsible citizens;
- respect for the uniqueness of every person and for the integrity of creation;
- a critical communication of culture, guided by a Christian concept of life centred on Jesus Christ whose life and teaching provides the model;
- transmission of values for life through the integration of faith and culture, and culture and life;
- nurturing of the faith of all members of the school community, recognising that each is at his or her own stage of faith development;
- encouraging and practising openness and dialogue between the various faith communities as a means of both education and spiritual formation and development;
- affirming and respecting the differing religious identities, backgrounds and traditions of learners while at the same time seeking to help all members of the school community to recognise and value what their different beliefs have in common, as well as recognising and respecting the differences of their own beliefs and those of others;
- serving both the Catholic and wider community with a concern for all people especially the poor and marginalised, and for the spiritual and moral development of every individual;
- working in partnership with parents – the primary educators of their children – the local church, the wider community and the organs of civil society, for the benefit of the community it serves and of society itself;
- being a model of Christian freedom, justice and love in its administration, teaching,

and relationships between educators, learners, parents, and community.

2. The recognised distinctive religious character of the school referred to in the agreement will be maintained in the following manner:

2.1 Through the Owner's exercising of those rights and responsibilities provided for in the Act and the relevant regulations, and as spelled out in the appended agreement between the Owner/Religious Organisation and the Governing Body, notably in:

- recommendations for staff appointments;
- matters of the school's religious and moral policy;
- the annual appraisal of the school's distinctive religious character;
- certain safeguards against the undermining of the distinctive religious character of the school.

2.2 Through the collaboration of the Governing Body, the principal and all staff to upholding four characteristics:

2.2.1 A religious dimension to the school's life

Worship:

The Catholic school expresses its community identity and ideals in its worship – religious assemblies, key events, themes, feast days and seasons are celebrated, and prayer is built into the rhythm of school life. The quality of participation varies, naturally, with individual faith-life.

Solidarity with the poor and disadvantaged:

The Catholic school is particularly sensitive to the call for a more just society and it tries to make its own contribution towards its realisation. This includes trying to put the demands of justice into practice in the daily life of the school. It also includes educating the learners to a sense of social responsibility and solidarity with the poor, disadvantaged and marginalised. In practice this takes different forms, responding wherever possible to local needs, concerns and outreach.

Critical reflection:

The Catholic school takes time and trouble to appraise its life against the challenges of its context, seen in both local and broader terms, and to confront influences that are hostile to human dignity. Both educators and learners are encouraged to acquire the skills of critical reflection and social analysis as helpful tools for the exercise of responsible citizenship.

2.2.2 Religious Education according to the broad Catholic approach

A Catholic school curriculum includes a substantial RE Programme, the principles, truths and ethics of which permeate whatever the school does. This programme is life-centred, broad and multi-faceted, encompassing personal growth as well as moral formation and explicitly religious exploration and practice. The programme is consistent with the Religious Education Policy for schools as approved by the Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference. It is rooted in the Catholic tradition but the

breadth of this accommodates others from similar religious traditions, while those from different religious traditions participate in ways that nurture their own spiritual development. In general, all learners participate in this programme in ways and at levels that are appropriate for the individual at the time. The right to religious freedom and freedom of conscience is, however, respected and special arrangements may be made in consultation with parents. The RE Programme attempts to address educational needs within a Christian framework. Ecclesial initiation may be left to the learners' own families and Church communities, with the school complementing and facilitating the process, or Catholic learners may be prepared for reception of the Sacraments by their school. A learner leaving a Catholic school should have had, at the appropriate level, the opportunity for an experiential grounding in scripture, theology, morality, social justice, philosophy and spirituality of a high educational standard.

2.2.3 Harmony with the values of the Catholic Church

The Catholic school stands in solidarity with the Catholic Church, sharing in the mission of its Bishop as principal teacher of the local Church. Ultimately, the reason for the Catholic school's existence is to incarnate and teach Gospel values for the good of its members and of the broader community. To do this assumes freedom of conscience in matters of justice and curriculum values.

2.2.4 An understanding with each member of the school community

The Catholic school aims to be a community. All staff, as well as learners with their parents, freely choose to join, knowing what this community strives to be, what it offers, and what it expects of its members. These things should be made known to all learners' families and all staff when they apply to join the school community. It should be understood that membership of the community depends on the honouring of these terms and that while the right to freedom of religion and conscience of each individual is respected, it would not be fair to join the community simply for selected benefits seen in isolation from the school's total mission. It is not acceptable for any official of the Department of Education, or for staff, learners or parents to actively undermine the school's religious and moral values.

References and resources

This bibliography lists materials that frame the identity of the Catholic school in South Africa. It includes references to Government policy, Church documents, South Africa Catholic Bishops Conference (SACBC) and National Catholic Board of Education (NCBE) policy, Catholic School Congress Declarations, the schedules relating to the Deed of Agreement, and some other useful sources.

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The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School: Guidelines for Reflection and Renewal. Congregation for Catholic Education. London: Catholic Truth Society, 1988

The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium. Congregation for Catholic Education, Rome 1998. Boston: Pauline Books and Media

Educating Today and Tomorrow: A Renewing Passion - Instrumentum laboris Congregation for Catholic Education, Rome 2014.

Educating to Fraternal Humanism – Building a “Civilisation of Love” 50 years after Populorum Progressio, Congregation for Catholic Education, Rome 2017

Deed of Agreement

The Distinctive Religious Character Schedule of the Deed of Agreement for Catholic Public Schools on Private Property

Religious Education Validation

An external validation asked for by the NCBE, carried out by the local Catholic schools Office supports the school's own ethos evaluation process as laid out in this appraisal document. Its focus is on the school's Religious Education Programme, particularly with regard to timetabled RE.

Other

Learning for Living: A Catholic Contribution to the Culture of Learning and Teaching in South Africa. Catholic Institute of Education. Cape Town: Juta & Co. Ltd., 1998

Thomas Groome, 'What Makes a School Catholic?' in *The Contemporary Catholic School: Context, Identity and Diversity*, ed. Terence H McLaughlin, Joseph O'Keefe S.J., and Bernadette O'Keefe. London: The Falmer Press, 1996, pp. 107-125

Glossary

Board of Governors – the governance structure of independent schools.

Ethos – The Catholic school's ethos is shown in the way its Catholic character and identity are expressed in all areas of school life. Some examples of signs of the ethos are: its vision and mission statements, various policies, the presence of religious symbols in the school; its practices including liturgical celebration, and good relationships between members of the school community; its commitments to Jesus Christ, the common good, and social and environmental justice.

Freedom of conscience – This refers to the constitutional right that must be respected with regard to religious observance. Usually this allows a child, after consultation with their parent/s, the right to withdraw from religious observances in public schools. Alternative arrangements must be made for them. However, in public schools with a distinctive religious character, and in faith-based independent schools, it is reasonable to inform prospective parents and learners of the Catholic character of the school and that this includes forms of public worship. It is also reasonable to ask that children and learners assent to attending these events. Nevertheless, attendance at an event of this nature does not necessarily mean participation.

Religious Organisation – This term is used to refer to the legal owner of the school. This could be a religious congregation, religious order, religious institute, trust, or a bishop.

Religious Education – This term is used to incorporate various planned aspects of the religious life of the Catholic school – timetabled and class-based Religious Education, the school assembly programme, regular liturgical and para-liturgical celebrations, and co-curricular activities such as a choir or YCS group or service work carried out by students.

In the Catholic school, an academic Religious Education is part of the core curriculum of the school. Fostering Hope requires that schools take a multi-process approach to RE, such as provided by the Lifebound and CORD materials. Religious Education in the Catholic school is faith-based. In addition to learning about religion, it also encourages learners to learn through religion and for religion.

Religion Education – This is an integrated aspect of the Life Skills/Life Orientation learning area of the National Curriculum.

Religion Studies – This is an elective, available through the National Curriculum, that high schools may offer from grades 10 to 12. It takes an academic, comparative approach to various world religions.

School Governing Body – The statutory governing structure for Catholic schools identified as public schools on private property.