

Signs of God's Presence

*Appraising the distinctive religious character
of the Catholic school*



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Catholic school

Catholic
Institute of
Education



Prepared for the Catholic Schools Proprietors' Association
by the Catholic Institute of Education



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Foreword

Appraising the distinctive religious character of the Catholic school

Scripture is overflowing 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 being of service to others.

Much work and many resources have been committed to the sustenance and development of the religious identity of our schools at local, regional and national levels. Emerging from this is a clearer understanding that our schools are an integral part of the mission of the Church to bring the Good News of Jesus Christ, and that we have a significant contribution to make to the development of South African society. Clear also is the fact that it is our responsibility as school communities to provide a ‘home-space’ where children learn to know God better, and where they are secure in the knowledge that God loves each one.

And just as we are necessarily committed to the demands of assessment in the ordinary curriculum of the school, 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. When the original ‘instrument’ was first promulgated in January 2001, it was in response to the legislative framework for public schools on private property. Our experience over these last years has helped us to realise that all our schools have the need to clarify their vision, and actively celebrate their religious identity – whether rural or urban, materially well-resourced or struggling, public or independent.

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, and bread to the hungry. Just as our faith cannot be taken for granted, so neither can our identity as Catholic schools. We ask you to take this tool, so ably prepared by the Catholic Institute of Education (CIE) on our behalf, 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 Katherine Gaylor OP

Chairperson: Catholic Schools Proprietors' Association

May 2008

Introduction

The Catholic Schools Proprietors' Association (CaSPA) requires each Catholic school – whether an independent school or a public school on private property – to undertake an appraisal of its distinctive Catholic ethos. In this way, the 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. The school can identify:

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

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, but simply asks that each school strives to be the best that it can be.

Appraisal process

CaSPA requires that each Catholic school appraises its religious character every year. The idea is to look at all the areas of the document and focus on one particular statement for the year. This will allow schools to identify one or two areas for improvement, adopt this as a programme, implement the action required, and give some consideration as to whether things are improving or not.

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. These can be outlined as follows:

- An Ethos Committee must be formed, which should be a sub-committee of the Governing Body.
- The Owner must be represented on the Ethos Committee.
- This Ethos Committee carries out an appraisal of the school's ethos annually. In a three-year cycle the school must have appraised all three statements. It is recommended that schools work on one statement per year guided by its set of indicators.
- The Ethos Committee develops an action plan to build on strengths and to address the weaknesses identified in relation to each statement.
- The Ethos Committee presents its report and action plan to a school staff meeting and to a meeting of the Governing Body.
- The Governing Body and Owner give their approval to the report and the plan.
- A copy of this report and action plan is lodged with the regional Catholic School Office.
- The Ethos Committee monitors the implementation of the plan and reports regularly on this at staff meetings and to meetings of the Governing Body.

Preparing for the appraisal

Members of the Ethos Committee should prepare themselves for carrying out the appraisal by reading through a previous report (where this exists), and by thinking about how the school's distinctive religious character is given effect through policy, programmes, and practices. To this end, it may be worth discussing these questions before considering the three statements and indicators that follow:

- Have any developments in national education policy, particularly with regard to the National Curriculum, Life Orientation and Religion Education, and Religious Observance, taken place that need to be noted? Do these have any implications for the way your school balances its responsibilities to the national curriculum, Life Orientation, and Religious Education (RE)?
- 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 RE Coordinator and the RE Department to review aspects of the RE Programme? What will be the focus of the review for this particular year?
- 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 ecology.
- 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?

The work of the Ethos Committee

The Ethos Committee need not be large. Three or four members should be sufficient. The principal, a deputy or head of department, and RE Coordinator should be on it. The School's Owner or their representative also needs to be on the Ethos Committee. In addition, a member of staff could be included to provide a different perspective, and in order to gain experience of the process and its implications for the school.

The Ethos Committee tasked by the Governing Body to carry out the appraisal process could work as follows:

- The Ethos Committee meets to study this document and to begin work for the year. Joint responses to the indicators need to be made and recorded on the relevant planning page. These need to be kept for comparison from year to year, and to inform the next cycle of appraisal.
- The Ethos Committee drafts a report and a plan for discussion in various forums within the school such as a meeting of Religious Education teachers and a staff meeting. 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.

- The Ethos Committee revises its draft report and plan in the light of comments received.
- The Ethos Committee presents this revised report and plan for discussion and adoption at a meeting of the Governing Body.
- The Ethos Committee proceeds with the implementation of the plan – and begins work on the next statement in the appraisal cycle.

However, the Ethos Committee does need to consider how it will include perspectives from all constituencies in the school – administrative, teaching, and cleaning staff; parents; students; the Owner, and the Governing Body.

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) 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

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

Statement 2

The Catholic school offers a substantial and coherent Religious Education Programme, across the whole school.

Statement 3

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

The statements and indicators are intended to help those who carry out the appraisal to identify signs of the health of the spirituality of the school. They also provide an opportunity to the school community to develop a sustainable Catholic ethos and spirituality, and to consider how this can improve the quality of education it offers.

Each of the three statements contains several specific indicators. 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

Statement 1

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

Indicator	Rating	What needs to be done? and/or How will it be done?	Who will do it?	When will it be done?
1.1 Mission statement upholds and promotes a distinctive Catholic character.				
1.2 Codes of conduct for staff and learners uphold the school's distinctive Catholic character.				
1.3 Policy for a Religious Education Programme which covers Religious Education, pastoral care and religious observance – i.e. assemblies and masses, liturgy and para-liturgy, and prayer.				
1.4 Sexuality Education policy developed within the framework of Catholic Church teaching on sexuality and makes provision for ongoing HIV/AIDS education.				
1.5 In-service training provided for all school employees to develop their understanding of and commitment to the school's distinctive Catholic character.				
1.6 A legal disciplinary procedure 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.				
1.7 Employment procedures take employment equity and the Catholic character of the school into account.				

Statement 2

The Catholic school offers a substantial and coherent Religious Education Programme, across the whole school

Indicator	Rating	What needs to be done? and/or How will it be done?	Who will do it?	When will it be done?
2.1 RE Programme based on <i>Fostering Hope</i> .				
2.2 RE Programme takes account of developments in national education policy (see appendix A).				
2.3 RE Programme respects the right to individual religious freedom and freedom of conscience and makes provision for individual learners in consultation with their parents.				
2.4 RE Programme is regularly appraised.				
2.5 RE Programme is provided adequate lesson time (at least 2 hours per week).				
2.6 RE Programme has the personnel and resources to sustain Religious Education, particularly with regard to the class teaching of Religious Education.				
2.7 RE Curriculum supported across the school with appropriate, graded, and helpful materials for teachers and students, e.g. <i>Lifebound</i> and <i>CORD</i> .				
2.8 RE Programme is life-centered and experiential and encourages religious exploration and practice.				

Statement 2 : The Catholic school offers a substantial and coherent Religious Education Programme, across the whole school (continued)

Indicator	Rating	What needs to be done? and/or How will it be done?	Who will do it?	When will it be done?
2.9 RE Programme promotes personal growth and responsible citizenship by encouraging ethical inquiry and moral formation.				
2.10 RE Programme develops critical and imaginative thinking on a range of ecological, economic, social and political concerns.				
2.11 RE Programme allows those from different religious traditions to participate in ways that will nurture their own spiritual development.				
2.12 RE Programme includes appropriate acts of religious observance – including assemblies and masses, liturgy and para-liturgy, and prayer – planned with attention to the liturgical calendar and contemporary relevance.				

Statement 3

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

Indicator	Rating	What needs to be done? and/or How will it be done?	Who will do it?	When will it be done?
3.1 Encourages a love for, and commitment to Jesus Christ and the Gospel message of love, peace, and justice.				
3.2 Establishes a community based on hospitality, love, and care for each individual.				
3.3 Models Christian love, justice, and freedom in all relationships between educators, learners, parents, and community.				
3.4 Promotes the spiritual growth of the school community through prayer, assemblies, the celebration of the mass, religious education, retreats, and – where available – the work of the chaplaincy.				
3.5 Celebrates its religious diversity through activities important to the members of its community.				
3.6 Strives to be a 'community serving humanity', with a concern for the personal, integrity, the common good, and an active commitment to the poor and the marginalised.				
3.7 Supports the work of the Catholic Church and its leaders, the local Bishops and the Pope.				
3.8 Fosters its relationship with its parish and with its Owner (the Bishop or religious congregation).				
3.9 Embraces the Charism of its founder/founding religious congregation.				

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 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:

- a. 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).
- b. The agreement between the Owner (and/or Religious Organisation) 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.

Appendix 2: Coordinating the Religious Education Programme

Coordinating the Religious Education Programme 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 obvious 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 religious activities that make up the school's RE Programme.

The following list of ideas is useful for the Governing Body and School Management Team in raising awareness of the wide range of concerns that make up the coordinating function. 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
- coordinating an annual appraisal of the school's religious character

Policy and practice

- coordinating the development of the school's RE policy
- 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 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 School Governing Body
- cueing the principal about opportunities in the calendar for liturgy, para-liturgy, 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, SACBC policy, Catholic School Congress Declarations, the schedules relating to the Deed of Agreement, and some other useful sources.

National Policy Framework for Schools

South African Schools Act (84 of 1996)

National Policy on HIV/AIDS, for Learners and Educators in Public Schools, and Students and Educators in Further Education and Training Institutions (Government Gazette, No. 20372, 10 August 1999)

National Policy on Whole School Evaluation (Government Gazette, No. 22512, 26 July 2001)

National Policy on Religion and Education (Government Gazette, No. 25459, 12 September 2003)

SACBC Policy Framework for Catholic Schools

Fostering Hope: Religious Education Policy for South African Catholic Schools (2nd Edition)

SACBC HIV/AIDS Policy for Catholic Schools, 2000

Integrity in Ministry, 2004

Catholic School's Congress Declarations

One Vision, One Future, One Voice – Vision Statement and Direction Statements, 2nd National Catholic Schools Congress, Johannesburg, 23-25 September 2004

Principal Catholic Church documents on Catholic Education

Declaration on Christian Education. Vatican II. 1965

The Catholic School. The Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, Rome 1977. Pretoria: SACBC (Series: Pastoral Action No. 10)

Lay Catholics in Schools: Witnesses to Faith. The Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, Rome 1982. Pretoria: SACBC (Series: Pastoral Action No. 29)

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

Deed of Agreement

Schedule 3 and Schedule 4 of the Deed of Agreement for Catholic Public Schools on Private Property

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

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.

Governing Body – In Catholic schools identified as public schools on private property this term refers to the School Governing Body. In Catholic schools identified as independent schools this term refers to the Board of Governors.

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 or a bishop. As an owner of a Catholic school, this congregation or Bishop is a member of the Catholic Schools Proprietors' Association (CaSPA).

Religious Education Programme – 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.

Religion Education – 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.

Religious Education – In the Catholic school, 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.



- What makes a school Catholic?
- How is this distinctive religious character expressed?
- Can this religious character be evaluated and strengthened?

Signs of God's Presence offers Catholic schools a way of evaluating and strengthening their distinctive religious character. Suggestions on who should do this, and how it should be done, are made. Indicators designed to focus the awareness of the school's community on how its ethos is expressed through its policies, programmes, and practices are provided.

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