

Catholic Schools – Promoting and Celebrating Achievements in Catholic Education.



" The Catholic educator must be interested in enabling young people to take up roles of leadership and responsibility in society and this necessarily involves the attainment of academic success. Yet we aim to form Christian people of competence and conscience, people who can play a full role in society with a Christian vision and value system, a concern for their fellow humans and a deep desire to put their talents at the service of others."

(Proclaiming the Mission-The Distinctive Philosophy and Values of Catholic Education)

The standard of academic achievement in Catholic schools has risen dramatically over the years. We have now reached a stage where our schools outperform those of similar size and composition in other sectors of education. With justification, we can now point to the fact that significant numbers of parents from all denominations choose Catholic Education because of the standard of education provided in our schools.

For many years now our schools have been able to celebrate and promote our academic achievements. The values of Catholic education however, go far beyond the mere academic. The distinctive educational provision offered in Catholic schools contributes significantly to the common good of society, not just at home but further afield. Many of our schools are involved in a wide range of activities which encourage our children to engage actively in society. It is those activities which we call on schools to promote and celebrate during the course of Catholic Schools' Week.

"You must become aware of and involved in the community if you are to contribute to its growth. To live in the community without taking part is to relinquish a say in its direction."

(Greg Henry Quinn)

Catholics have traditionally placed much emphasis on practical charity. Think of your own school and consider how it instils in its pupils an awareness and practical application of charitable acts. Perhaps as a school you are engaged in activities at home or abroad which foster in your pupils a true understanding of their own dignity and the dignity of others. How has this been celebrated within the school and the wider community? Can you identify some aspect of school life where relationships or the "common good" might be enhanced? Can this be developed within your own school, with other schools or with the parish community?





"To feel good about life, know the feeling of accomplishment. To know the feeling of accomplishment, accomplish something"
(Greg Henry Quinn)

Here is a flavour of the many achievements of our Catholic schools.

- A Derry PS won £2000 for their innovative projects in caring for the environment.
- School pupils perform for teachers at major education conference.
- Pupils organise a Christmas party for the elderly.
- A County Down PS develops citizenship through the Character Approach to Problem Solving (CAPS)
- SEELB pupil wins Outstanding Individual Sporting Achievement Award.
- Pupils raise funds for Trocaire's Global gift Plan.
- Student involvement in Kenyan outreach scheme.
- Catholic School's involvement in European exchange programmes.

Catholic education is founded on the unique partnership of home, school and parish.

How true that is and yet in an age when the school population is in decline, competition for pupils is fierce and the impact of secularisation within society is placing an added burden on the Catholic school in terms of an obligation to contribute to the faith formation of pupils and staff, we should ask ourselves to what extent have we lost sight of the partnership between home, school and parish?

Does your school see itself as part of the Catholic family in its widest sense? How do you contribute to the development of partnerships with other schools in both the primary and post-primary sector? To what extent does your parish contribute to school life and vice-versa?

Are you as a member of the Catholic education family ready to explore the many opportunities to celebrate the achievements of Catholic education with your brothers and sisters in education at parish, home and other school level?

Do you have that sense of altruism required to meet this most demanding of challenges?

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"There is an explicit demand that each school by providing friendly contacts between pupils of different characters and backgrounds encourages mutual understanding".
(Building Peace Shaping the Future)



The Catholic school is committed to living the Catholic faith and is called to share that faith with others. The elements of our faith revolve around a story and a vision — the story of God's revelation to us through Jesus Christ and the Church and the vision of living out that story in practice. In sharing our faith with others we share appropriate elements of the Christian Story along with its Vision. The Catholic school need not therefore be confined to Catholic children. In fact the presence of children from other denominations and cultural backgrounds can enrich the education experience offered by the school.

Consider ways in which the presence of such children is celebrated in your school. How are they made to feel welcome and seen as valued members of the school community? Are parents/ prospective parents aware of your school's commitment to respect for others? Is your involvement in EMU or Schools' Community Relations Projects brought to the attention of parents and the wider community? With your colleagues in your parish schools can you bring the Catholic school's commitment to inclusion and respect for others to the attention of the community as a whole?



" Catholic education is distinctive in that its aim is not only to influence what students know and can do, but also the kind of people they will become".
(Scottish Catholic Education Service)

Catholics believe that human beings are inherently good, made in the image of God and raised to the position of sons and daughters of God by the work of Jesus. Catholic education should be characterised by an affirmation of pupils' basic goodness, promoting their dignity, honouring their fundamental rights and developing their gifts to the full. How does your school do this in the classroom and in co-operation with the parent body? Are parents and others aware of the many ways in which your school helps pupils achieve their full potential according to their interests and abilities? Can you, with the parents and wider community explore ways in which the many differing achievements of your pupils can be celebrated in a way which identifies the true nature of education as the holistic formation of the person.