

Diocese of Paisley



Education Department

CHAPLAINCY IN CATHOLIC SCHOOLS:

A School-Parish Partnership

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1. Introduction

1.1 The Centrality of School Chaplains and Chaplaincies:

The Charter for Catholic Schools in Scotland advises that Catholic schools have a *'commitment to the spiritual formation of the school community, through the shared experience of prayer and liturgy and in partnership with local parishes.'*¹ To support them in this endeavour, Bishops across the British Isles have always held that *'Chaplaincy is an essential element in the faith and pastoral mission of our Catholic Schools.'*²

The ministry of the chaplain is at the service of the whole school community: for Leaders, who collaborate with him in the day to day life of the school; for Teachers and other staff, who often involve him in their lives as well as the day to day life of the school; for Parents and Guardians, who see him as a link between their parish and the school; as well as, of course, for our Young People.

Above all, chaplaincy is critical in enabling the Catholic primary and secondary school to discharge its mission in the *'integral education and formation of the human person'*.³ Accordingly, school chaplains have a key role especially in enabling young people, who are in such a crucial stage in their formation in human personality, to encounter Christ and engage with the Church.

1.2 A Responsibility Shared by the Whole School Community:

The spiritual life of the school and the work of chaplaincy are, therefore, a high priority in Catholic schools, led by the Head Teacher, and seen as the responsibility of the whole school community. In the secondary school it is not just the concern of the Religious Education Department or the Chaplain.

*"All baptised members of the Church share in 'the saving mission of the Church itself', states the Second Vatican Council. 'Through their baptism and confirmation, all are commissioned to that apostolate by the Lord Himself' (Lumen Gentium, Paragraph 33). Catholic school staff, teachers and other non-teaching staff, have this same call."*⁴

The Congregation for Catholic Education also highlights the role of every teacher in the spiritual life of the school:

In the Catholic school, "prime responsibility for creating this unique Christian school climate rests with the teachers, as individuals and as a community". Teaching has an extraordinary moral depth and is one of man's most excellent and creative activities, for the teacher does not write on inanimate material, but on the very spirits of human beings. The personal relations between the teacher and the students, therefore, assume an enormous importance

¹ Charter for Catholic Schools in Scotland

² Bishop Patrick O'Donohue (*Chaplaincy in Catholic Secondary Schools, May 2006*)

³ Charter for Catholic Schools in Scotland

⁴ Bishop Patrick O'Donohue (*Chaplaincy in Catholic Secondary Schools, May 2006*)

and are not limited simply to giving and taking. Moreover, we must remember that teachers and educators fulfil a specific Christian vocation and share an equally specific participation in the mission of the Church, to the extent that "it depends chiefly on them whether the Catholic school achieves its purpose".⁵

The Catholic teacher, therefore, 'must be a source of spiritual inspiration' to other members of the school community.⁶ In addition, members of support staff often play a notable role in the faith life of the school.

1.3 The Challenges of Chaplaincy Today:

Chaplains today often work in difficult circumstances. They discharge their parish responsibilities as well as their duties as chaplain to one or more schools. An increasing percentage of families who are not Catholic choose Catholic schools for their children who have little or no understanding of our liturgy. There are also a significant number of young Catholics who come from families who do not practise their faith regularly and have a tenuous connection with their local parish or the Church. Many staff are not Catholic, although very often show a willingness to support the spiritual life of the school. These factors present a challenge for the chaplain as well as an opportunity for evangelisation. It is important that they should be made to feel welcome and included in the spiritual life of the school.

1.4 The Lasting Rewards of Chaplaincy:

Despite these challenges, both chaplains and schools find school chaplaincy a most rewarding ministry. The visible presence of the chaplain in classes, corridors, social spaces and staffrooms, the opportunity just to 'be' in the school, to walk around apparently without obvious purpose or specific aim, enables him to build relationships with staff and pupils. Young people talk to chaplains about their lives and interests, often better in informal contexts, and this can frequently provide a way to connect to families. The chaplain is invariably the first port of call in certain situations. In tragedies, staff and young people recognise that they can turn to him for support and guidance and to bring the community together in the celebration of Holy Mass.

1.5 Chaplaincy and our Diocesan Synod:

The significance of School Chaplains is found in several sections of the Acts of the First Diocesan Synod: Family, schools and parishes (4.6); Care of priests – ongoing formation (4.4); and Positions of responsibility - provision of ongoing training and support to perform roles (4.3).

⁵ The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium, Congregation for Catholic Education, 1997

⁶ *Lay Catholics In Schools: Witnesses To Faith*, Congregation for Catholic Education, 1982

1.6 The Diocesan Education Department supporting Chaplaincy:

Our Education Department will plan support for chaplains by organising an annual CLPL programme which will be based upon the priorities which chaplains themselves have identified. Before a priest takes up his role as chaplain for the first time, the Diocesan Education Department will meet with him and plan an induction programme in collaboration with the school and experienced chaplains.

In addition, we wish to work with schools and chaplains to strengthen support networks within schools for chaplains and to clarify the contribution which schools in turn may expect from them. Across our schools, there is much good practice of schools and chaplains working together. This has helped to shape the Features of Effective Practice in Sections 2 and 3. Our approach is furthermore based upon the recommendations of the Catholic Education Commission's Report on Chaplaincy.⁷ We have also learned from *'The Role of the Chaplain in Schools'* published by the Catholic Education Service of England and Wales, although it should be noted that lay people rather than priests are often employed as chaplains to schools in those nations.

⁷ *Chaplaincy in Catholic Schools in Scotland: A Report of the Catholic Education Commission – Scotland, 2009*

2. What Schools can Expect of Chaplains – Features of Effective Practice

How can chaplains support the school in discharging its role in the spiritual formation of children and young people?

2.1 The Chaplain is a visible presence

- visiting the school regularly;
- getting to know staff and pupils by dropping into classes, social spaces and the staffroom while observing boundaries in line with Church Safeguarding Guidelines;
- being viewed as a trusted and approachable figure whom staff and pupils turn to for spiritual and other advice and guidance, particularly at times of bereavement and family crisis;
- taking part in important celebrations and social occasions.

2.2 The Chaplain develops positive working relationships with staff:

- working closely with the Head Teacher and supporting him/her in leading the Catholic mission of the school;
- liaising with the primary school Senior Management Team or the Pastoral Team within the secondary school, particularly at times of family difficulties, tragedy and bereavement, to provide spiritual support for children and young people; and having a special care for vulnerable or disadvantaged children;
- developing a positive working relationship in a secondary school with the Religious Education Department and contributing where appropriate to the Religious Education curriculum and appropriate CLPL;
- contributing to the appointment of the Church Representative on the Parent Council;

2.3 The Chaplain develops positive working relationships with parents and families

- encouraging them in their role as the *'first teachers of their child in the ways of faith'*⁸
- supporting them at times of difficulty.

2.4 The Chaplain develops positive working relationships with local parishes and Diocese

- helping to build an effective partnership between the school and Cluster parishes;
- maintaining contact with the Director of Vocations and Youth;
- working in partnership with the Bishop, the Vicar Episcopal for Education and the Diocesan Education Department.

⁸ Rite of Baptism

2.5 The Chaplain contributes significantly to the spiritual, sacramental and liturgical life of the school by:

- celebrating Mass regularly;
- liaising with other members of the local clergy to celebrate Mass and administer the Sacrament of Reconciliation in school as appropriate;
- serving as a key member of the Chaplaincy Committee and communicating regularly with the Head Teacher/Senior Leader who chairs the Chaplaincy Committee;
- supporting the Chaplaincy Committee in planning and preparing Masses and liturgies and advising on opportunities for young people to experience important Feasts and the Seasons of the Church's Calendar;
- commissioning members of staff and pupils as Readers and Extraordinary Ministers of the Eucharist for ministry within the school;
- encouraging the use of the Oratory and other Sacred Spaces for private prayer, Eucharistic Adoration and Christian Meditation;
- advising on the safe and worthy reservation of the Blessed Sacrament in the school Oratory, and the use of the Oratory for prayer and worship;
- helping staff to recognise and develop the links between Religious Education, prayer and liturgy, and Faith in Action programmes;
- advising and supporting the school in developing a coherent and progressive Retreat programme;
- providing support for the sacramental preparation of Primary pupils;
- supporting the Pope Francis Faith Award and Caritas Award candidates as appropriate;
- taking an interest in 'Faith in Action' groups and activities e.g. Aid to the Church in Need, Missio, SCIAF, Pro-Life/SPUC, international partnerships (e.g. Malawi, Kenya, Uganda and *Let the Children Live*) and SSVP, the latter being particularly useful in strengthening bonds with local parish communities and accessing assistance for disadvantaged pupils and their families;
- offering Holy Mass/liturgies on In-service Days and helping to organise other opportunities for the spiritual and human development of staff; and supporting staff to prepare and lead reflections for pupils and colleagues;
- contributing to the formation of the school community in its chosen value system and by preparing Prayers of Intercession and Reflections for Holy Mass to celebrate the Feasts of School and House Patrons; and promoting the School Motto as a leitmotif of the overriding philosophy of the school.

3. What Chaplains can Expect of Schools – Features of Effective Practice

3.1 How can schools create the conditions to support the chaplain and maximise the impact of his work?

- The spiritual life of the school is seen as the responsibility of the whole school community, led by the Head Teacher, and in High Schools not just the Religious Education Department.
- The Head Teacher sees his/her role in developing the spiritual and liturgical life of the school as a priority.
- A Senior Leader is the designated point of contact for the chaplain.
- The chaplain is recognised as a key member of the school community and attends school events and celebrations.
- The chaplain has access to a suitable space to meet staff and pupils in privacy according to the principles of child protection.
- There are procedures in place to enable the chaplain to purchase necessary resources.
- Good practice, while adhering strictly to authority policy and GDPR guidelines, would be for the class teacher to share relevant pupil information with the chaplain particularly if there are occasions when the school chaplain takes a class or groups of pupils on his own.

3.2 A Chaplaincy Committee⁹ exists to support the work of the chaplain:

- It is led by a member of the Senior Leadership Team.
- It comprises members of staff from across the school, wherever possible including a member of the Music Department and a member of the administrative team.
- In Primary Schools this may be led by the Senior Leadership Team or where applicable in partnership with a Chaplaincy/Liturgy Group.
- In High Schools, it comprises senior pupils with a specific remit to take forward the work of the spiritual and liturgical life of the school.
- Whenever possible, representatives of the Parent Council/PTA and local parishes are members.
- Its work will reflect the context of each particular school.

⁹ Schools often choose to organise their chaplaincy structures differently. While some channel their support through one Chaplaincy or Pastoral Committee, others divide the workload between a Chaplaincy Committee and a Liturgy Committee, each with appropriate remits, and with the former encompassing a much broader scope of mission than simply liturgy. This is a decision for each school to make within its own context.

3.3 The Chaplaincy Committee:

- Sets out an agreement between the school and the chaplain regarding their mutual expectations and needs for the academic year.
- Plans an annual liturgical calendar, where possible in partnership with local parishes and Cluster schools, and embeds it within the overall school calendar.
 - The liturgical calendar enables children and young people who may not otherwise engage with the Church to experience the riches of the Seasons of the Church's liturgy.
 - The liturgical calendar includes Whole-School or Stage/Year Group Masses or liturgies as well as class-based prayers and themed reflections.
- Enables teachers and the chaplain to work together to plan Masses, liturgies and the Sacramental preparation programme.
- Takes responsibility for individual action points in preparing the liturgies and ensuring children and young people with specific roles are fully prepared. In particular, those chosen to read are given adequate time and support to enable them to do so clearly and with meaning.
- Ensures Religious Education lessons beforehand set the context for the celebration of these liturgies.
- Enables opportunities for private prayer e.g. through Eucharistic Adoration and Christian Meditation.
- Develops a coherent and progressive programme of Retreats, pilgrimages or similar occasions which provides significant spiritual experiences for children and young people, enabling them to deepen their faith and grow in maturity in their spiritual lives.
- Engages Caritas students in the work of chaplaincy and develops their capacity to contribute to and lead services, assemblies and retreats.
- Organises Staff Retreats or Staff Masses/liturgies on In-service Days.
- Initiates particular Masses or liturgies eg on occasions of tragedy and bereavement.
- Takes care of the Oratory or other Sacred Spaces within the school.
- Updates the whole staff regularly on events and how they can support them.
- Communicates with parents through the school newsletter, website and social media e.g. publishing the Liturgical Calendar and posting updates on the celebration of specific Masses, liturgies and Retreats.
- Liaises effectively with partner schools, particularly at times of transition;
- Supports Retreats in partner Primary Schools by training senior pupils to lead activities;
- Liaises with the Vicar Episcopal for Youth and Vocations and supports events in the Youth Calendar;
- Reviews its work each year, within the context of *Developing in Faith*, and plans for further enhancements to its work

3.4 Whole-school or Stage/Year Group Masses or liturgies are celebrated in a calm and prayerful atmosphere:

- A member of the Senior Leadership Team briefly introduces the liturgy beforehand, explaining its importance and setting out expectations for the young people's respectful and dignified participation.
- Before leaving the class, teachers set out their expectations of their pupils' demeanour, settle them quietly in the assembly hall or church and remain seated beside them during the service.
- Mass leaflets or equivalent are available to enable young people to follow and participate in the liturgy.
- At the reception of Holy Communion, there are clear procedures and routines for this to be conducted in an orderly and dignified manner.

4. Evaluating Chaplaincy – Links to Developing in Faith

Chaplaincy Committees are asked to review their work each year in line with best practice on self-evaluation and to use their judgements to plan any enhancements to their programmes. The following table is taken from *Developing in Faith*¹⁰ and represents the most relevant features relating to chaplaincy from the various themes of the document.

Features of Effective Practice	Developing in Faith Theme	HGIOS QIs
Mass is celebrated by our chaplain in school on particular occasions.	Honouring Jesus Christ as the Way, the Truth and the Life	2.1, 3.1, 2.7
We provide opportunities for pupils to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation.		2.1, 3.1
We provide opportunities for our pupils to participate in Retreats, Missions and pilgrimages to holy places.		2.1, 3.1
Our pupils regularly participate in various opportunities for prayer.		2.1, 3.1
Together with our parish, we plan activities for the year ahead.		2.7
We provide a range of liturgical experiences with parish support.		2.1, 3.1, 2.7
Our pupils are well supported by both school and parish(es) when preparing for Sacraments.		2.7
Our pupils have opportunities to attend Mass in local parishes on particular occasions.		2.1, 3.1, 2.7
Staff familiarise our pupils with the school oratory/sacred spaces within the classroom		2.1, 3.1
School liturgical displays highlight various Seasons, Feast Days, and months of devotion		2.1, 3.1
The chaplain, along with school staff, meets with parents to support them in the sacramental preparation of their children.	Community of Faith and Learning	2.5
All members of our school are involved in evaluating the life and work of the school as a community of faith e.g. through surveys, focus groups, bodies such as the Pupil Council, <i>the chaplain and the Chaplaincy Committee</i> .		1.1
With the support of our school chaplain, we enable staff to develop spiritually through e.g. Staff Masses, liturgies, reflections, retreats and other celebrations of the sacraments.		1.4
We support chaplaincy with adequate resources and time.		1.5

¹⁰ *Developing in Faith* Appendices, SCES, October 2019

Features of Effective Practice	Developing in Faith Theme	HGIOS QIs
Our school assemblies focus on Gospel values and explain their scriptural origins	Promoting Gospel Values	2.1, 3.1
We explicitly link our school calendar to the Church's liturgical year.	Celebrating and Worshipping ¹¹	2.1
Our teachers and pupils participate in classroom prayer.		2.1
Our pupils benefit from well-planned assembly prayers and services.		2.1
Prayer is a feature of all staff meetings and other school groups.		1.4
We publish a Calendar of Mass celebrations in collaboration with the chaplain and local parishes.		2.1
Our school calendar includes provision of particular services, such as the Rosary during October/May, Mass during Lent, Stations of the Cross.		2.1
Our Chaplaincy Committee is active in supporting our Chaplain to nurture the faith life of our school.		2.1
Our Chaplaincy Committee includes representatives of local parishes.		2.1, 2.7
We organise a yearly programme of Retreat and pilgrimage activities for various stages.		2.1
We organise Catholic Education week activities in partnership with our parish(es),		2.1
We work with appropriate Church agencies to enrich the spiritual formation of children and young people.		2.7
We are proactive in developing links with the parish(es) and the diocese.		2.7

¹¹ The theme 'Celebrating and Worshipping' is particularly relevant to Chaplaincy. A few of the features of effective practice have been selected here.

Appendix One

Chaplaincy in Catholic Schools – a Report of the Catholic Education Commission – Scotland (2009)

Summary of Recommendations	
1.	Schools should be able to benefit from the support of a priest wherever possible. To achieve this aim, Dioceses are advised to nominate a priest to work in liaison with specified schools in their area.
2.	Each school should establish a Chaplaincy Team which will work with the Chaplain(s) and other staff to promote the religious and pastoral life of the school community.
3.	Within each deanery there should be regular opportunities to consider how schools and parishes can support each other in their work in the community.
4.	The Chaplaincy Team has a responsibility to offer support which is relevant to the school, its staff and its pupils in its given context, which may vary significantly from school to school.
5.	Each school should use Sections 3.5 to 3.9 of this report as guidelines for the work of the School Chaplain and Chaplaincy Team.
6.	Each school, in partnership with the local deanery, should use these guidelines to agree a plan which will allow the Chaplaincy Team to have access to the resources and support which it needs.
7.	Each school should, through the SMT link, work closely with the Chaplaincy Team to ensure that there is a shared understanding of the responsibilities of the school in areas such as Child Protection and legal accountability to parents and others.
8.	Every member of the school community should share in the benefits of the school's ethos and should consider carefully how to contribute to its promotion and development.
9.	Schools should give consideration to the advice offered in Section 4.5 of this report in planning the role of the Chaplain in supporting Religious Education across the school.
10.	Dioceses should consider the value of providing a Diocesan Handbook on School Chaplaincy.
11.	Each school should devise an annual calendar which takes account of all known pastoral and liturgical events and should incorporate this calendar within the school's annual planning process.
12.	A coherent programme of training suitable to the needs of Chaplains and Chaplaincy Teams should be provided. This should include pre-service training, in service support and specific training to meet known needs as Chaplaincy programmes develop.
13.	A national programme of training and development for seminarians and for priest Chaplains should be built up, with a view to ensuring consistency and coherence in the preparation of priests for School Chaplaincy. Similar provision should be available for lay and associate Chaplains working in schools. This programme should be supplemented regularly by training for Chaplains in each diocese and by the provision of national training events for Chaplains.
14.	Schools should consider how best they might support the training of Chaplains and Chaplaincy Teams. A member of the school Senior Management Team should be responsible for the oversight of this area and for ensuring that Chaplaincy Team members are aware of the opportunities open to them. The school should also allocate time for the promotion of Chaplaincy as part of its annual school programme.
15.	The Chaplaincy Team should extend an invitation to all pupils to contribute to and benefit from the ethos and community life of the school.



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