

CATHOLIC EDUCATION FOR ALL

Shaping the future of Post-primary Catholic education





Introduction

Catholic schools have a long established tradition of successfully providing education to young people. Some of our oldest schools in Northern Ireland were founded as far back as the early 1800s, with the newest post-primary school, St Killian's College, opening 29th March 2010. Today there are almost 100 Catholic post-primary schools in Northern Ireland educating over 68,000 young people between the ages of 11-19. Working with an agreed vision, and in partnership with other education providers, we have overcome many challenges in the past. The time has come again when changes in society, as well as in Government policy, mean we have to think about how best to maintain our commitment to our young people in the future. We have a very successful Catholic school system. We want to ensure it is appropriately planned and managed so that future generations of children can continue to access the high quality education provided to current and previous generations.

Our collective aim, as providers of Catholic education, has always been the development of faith communities, the provision of education and pastoral support that allow young people to reach their full potential in life.

Why do we need to change?

The challenges which led us to review the way we deliver post-primary education include:

- significant curriculum changes being implemented by the Department of Education in response to economic and social changes. This requires increased access to a wider choice of subjects for all pupils through the Entitlement Framework. From 2013 all post-primary schools have to provide access to a minimum of 24 courses at Key Stage 4 (14-16) and 27 courses at post-16;
- the phasing out of the transfer test. This means that we have a challenge to deliver a non academically selective system of transfer at age 11 for our young people;
- falling pupil numbers leading to a changed intake profile in many areas, an increase in the number of surplus places leading to significant reduction in funding for some schools;

- the Sustainable Schools policy which indicates that post-primary schools should operate with a minimum number of 500 pupils at 11-16 and 100 at Post-16; and
- the development of an area-based approach for the planning of education, involving all providers of education.

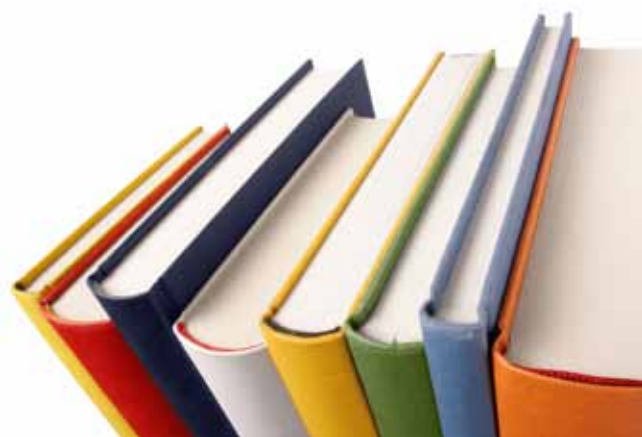
Our review process

In September 2006, the Northern Ireland Commission for Catholic Education (NICCE) launched a comprehensive review of Catholic-managed post-primary education across Northern Ireland. The review has enabled post-primary Principals, Boards of Governors and Trustees to work together to identify options or proposals for the future delivery of high quality post-primary Catholic education in sixteen project areas.

Supported by the Department of Education the review has been closely linked to work being developed with our other educational partners.

The review has been guided at all times by NICCE's Core Principles which state that any arrangement for post-primary education should:

- optimise high quality education provision and excellence in outcomes for all pupils;
- actively promote justice, reconciliation, mutual understanding, solidarity, inclusive communities and be part of genuinely pluralist provision;
- contribute to the provision of education choices for parents and pupils; and
- be the result of transparent consultative processes.





What we are hoping to achieve

We want to ensure that all children educated in Catholic schools receive the best and the most appropriate education available. Delivering an equitable and just education means that no child should lose out simply because of geography or demographics. In March 2009 NICCE set out very clearly our commitment to a non-selective future through our policy statement which is available at www.pprce.org. Trustees as Catholic education providers are moving away from academic selection as a means of transfer at age eleven as part of a strategic and long term response to all the changes which confront education provision in Northern Ireland in the coming years. We believe that every child educated in a Catholic school is entitled to receive a quality education in modern, well equipped facilities. This cannot be delivered for all of our children without a significant shift in the way our facilities are currently organised, managed and maintained.

Given the challenges outlined above we want to provide solutions in local areas which will help schools deliver core benefits to all pupils. These include:

- increased access for all pupils to high quality academic and applied educational pathways;
- effective transition from primary through post-primary to third level education and employment in the 21st century;
- effective collaborative links with other schools and education providers through Area Learning Communities to ensure choice and access to a wide range of general and applied courses;
- opportunities for every young person to develop their full potential;
- a network of quality schools guaranteeing access to a curriculum that will meet the needs of all pupils within the context of the Entitlement Framework;
- a schools' estate which is fit for purpose, viable, sustainable and capable of facilitating the education to which every child is entitled.



Education in your area

There are 16 discrete projects which have largely been determined along diocesan structures. In some cases, where appropriate, project areas include schools from neighbouring dioceses. The projects include diocesan schools and schools which are provided by the religious congregations.

Greater detail on project areas can be found on our website at www.pprce.org.





Consultation – we want your views

In this document we set out the broad principles which will apply to the way education is delivered through the Catholic sector. We will shortly be distributing a consultation paper which will address the future provision of education in each local area.

All post-primary school leaders in the Catholic-managed sector have contributed to the review process. We are grateful to the school principals and chairs of the Boards of Governors of all our post primary schools for their input so far. We also recognise the importance of our primary schools and have arranged for the consultation to encompass primary school staff and parents.

We hope that everyone with an interest in the future delivery of post-primary Catholic education in Northern Ireland will respond to these proposals. Your comments will ensure we have as broad a range of perspectives as possible.

We want to hear the views of:

- pupils;
- parents;
- teachers;
- other school staff members;
- Boards of Governors;
- other educational partners; and
- the wider public.

This consultation process is your chance to help shape the future of the provision of Catholic education in your area. The local consultation papers, which will be distributed through our schools and will be available on our website, will set out how to respond to the consultation. Please take the time to read those documents and respond. Make sure you have your say, it is important. When we have completed these consultations we will finalise our considered view on the best way forward. This will be made available for further consideration and consultation.

For further information contact:

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www.pprce.org

Glossary Of Terms

Northern Ireland Commission for Catholic Education.

This is the representative body for diocesan and religious Trustees of all Catholic schools in Northern Ireland. Trustees set the general policy for Catholic schools, especially where that policy touches on ethos, the definitive character of Catholic schools and planning for the whole Catholic sector.

Website: www.catholiceducation-ni.com

Entitlement Framework.

The Entitlement Framework is an integral part of young peoples' education within the Revised Curriculum for ages 14-19. The target date for full implementation of the Entitlement Framework is September 2013. From this date schools will be required to provide pupils with access to a minimum number of courses at age 14-19 [currently 24] and a minimum number of courses at post-16 [currently 27]. In both cases at least one third of the courses must be general [academic], at least one-third of the courses must be applied [vocational, professional, technical] and the remaining one-third is at the discretion of the school.

Website: www.deni.gov.uk

Area Learning Communities.

Schools working with other schools and with further education colleges in the development of learning communities to plan and co-ordinate collaborative provision [particularly for 14-19 students]. There are currently 29 area learning communities across Northern Ireland.

Website: www.deni.gov.uk

Area Based Planning.

Area based planning is about anticipating the future needs of an area and planning to meet those needs. Its central objective is to provide sufficient educational places through the appropriate mix of facilities of the right size, in the right locations. Area based planning has a broader focus than just schools and colleges. It covers youth services, early years provision, and can potentially include other community provision.

Sustainable Schools Policy.

The Sustainable Schools policy 2009 sets out six criteria and associated indicators that provide a framework for helping to consider issues of school sustainability. These are quality education experience; stable enrolment trends which should be a minimum of 500 in an 11-16 school and 600 in an 11-19 school; sound financial position; strong leadership and management; accessibility and strong links with the community.

Website: www.deni.gov.uk/a_policy_for_sustainable_schools