



Scottish Catholic Education Service
Parental Involvement Working Group
November 2015



Dear Parent Council Chair

The Parental Involvement Working Group has been established by SCES to encourage parents to work in partnership with schools and parishes so that Catholic schools can provide the highest quality of Catholic education. PIWG was formally established in 2013 to provide this support to parents, and particularly to Parent Councils of Catholic schools.

I wrote to you in November 2014 to provide some information for parents of children attending Catholic schools and for Parent Council members; I am writing again this November to provide an update. You can also find out more about what the Group has been doing at the website of the Scottish Catholic Education Service (www.sces.org.uk).

1. Publications

The Group has produced some materials for parents that were suggested by parents themselves. These will be useful for members of your Parent Council and for support parental involvement generally:

- **Questions and Answers** covering basic questions asked about Catholic schools
- Two **Prayer resources** for parents to support the faith development of children in Primary and young people in Secondary school
- A **general leaflet for parents** about their involvement in Catholic schools
- A leaflet for parents on the importance of their involvement in **God's Loving Plan**.

There are also specific leaflets for parents for **Called to Love**, the health and relationships education programme for Secondary Schools.

These materials can be found at <http://sces.org.uk/resources-for-parents/>

2. Catholic Education Week 31st January to 6th February 2016 Theme: Learning to be Merciful

Catholic Education Week is an opportunity for all parts of the school community to affirm the value of Catholic education. The theme, "Learning to be Merciful", lends itself to community activities that involve families, pupils, staff, parents and parishes. Caritas pupils (usually S6) are well placed to be involved in activities that centre on the theme of Mercy. Here are some suggestions for activities which might be led or supported by Parent Councils:

Individual schools

- A liturgical event during the week or at the end of the week around the theme of Mercy. For example, a prayer service around the Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy (see below)
- Parents and grandparents contributing to Religious Education classes – speaking about their own faith experience of the Sacrament of Reconciliation.
- Invite pupils to a meeting of the Parents' Council to review school policy and practices around bullying and relationships
- Work with the school to create a community choir – pupils, parents and staff – to give a performance or contribute to an event. Or get parents or staff or pupils to join an existing school or church choir for some event during the week. The theme of the songs/hymns would be around the notion of Mercy and Forgiveness
- Hold a Gospel study group in the parish during the week that gets parents to interact with pupils on Divine Mercy
- Maximise parental involvement in parish Masses during the week, get parents to speak at Mass about what they value about Catholic education, how Catholic schools help to build a society where Mercy is made real
- Contact parish priests inviting them to suggest ideas for what parents / the Parent Council might do
- Invite local priests to a Parent Council meeting to discuss Catholic Education Week
- In secondary schools, promote involvement by young people in World Youth Day in Poland in 2016

For more information about Catholic education go to <http://sces.org.uk/>

For information on the Parental Involvement Working Group: see http://sces.org.uk/catholic_school_parents/ or follow us on Twitter @RCSchoolParents or [email](mailto:parents@sces.org.uk) us parents@sces.org.uk

- Hold a debate involving pupils and parents on a theme that involves Mercy (“Mercy is an outdated idea for the 21st Century”, “Justice is more important than mercy”, “Only the weak are interested in mercy” etc.)
- Have parents fully involved in a whole school challenge to put all the Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy into action over the week. Be imaginative in how you do this – e.g. ‘feed the hungry’ - donate to foodbanks, ‘clothe the naked’ - donate old clothes to charity shops’, ‘comfort the sorrowful’ - visit an elderly neighbour, etc.
- Create an event in which school pupils focus on the story of St Faustina - the ‘Apostle of Divine Mercy’. NB St Faustina’s tomb is in Krakow where World Youth Day 2016 is being held so there is an opportunity to make this link
- A Pancake Night. Bring forward Pancake Tuesday, combining Mass and a social activity. The social activity can be simple – pancakes and tea. Or hold ‘The Great School Pancake Make Off’ where teams could enter and money raised from entry and selling of pancakes could provide food for the local food bank.

School clusters – secondary schools and associated primary schools

- Encourage your secondary school Parent Council to work with associated primary Parent Councils and local priests to hold a joint event, e.g., where secondary school pupils lead primary pupils in the Corporal Works of Mercy.
- Hold an event that connects young people (usually S6) involved in the Caritas award with P6/7 pupils involved in the Pope Francis Faith award.
- Organise an event to include a speaker to consider the Holy Year of Mercy and what Pope Francis says about this. Use this as a basis for stimulating Parent Council activity during the Holy Year of Mercy.
- Organise a cluster Mass / Penitential Service on the theme of Mercy. Find ways to open this out so that it is not seen as an event ‘belonging’ to one school. Consider how to involve all in the school communities – pupils, parents and staff – in the mass / service. Prepare something to give to parents who attend – a leaflet on St Faustina, a prayer card about Divine Mercy, etc.
- Hold a Cluster Parent Councils meeting / social event (perhaps making use of the Question and Answer document or to share the successes of individual Parent Councils) and explore ideas about how the Parent Councils can support each other better in the future.

Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy

Corporal Works of Mercy:

- To feed the hungry
- To give drink to the thirsty
- To clothe the naked
- To shelter the homeless
- To visit the sick and imprisoned
- To bury the dead.

Spiritual Works of Mercy

- To instruct the ignorant
- To counsel the doubtful
- To admonish sinners
- To bear wrongs patiently
- To forgive offences willingly
- To comfort the afflicted
- To pray for the living and the dead.

3. The Catholic School: Developing in Faith

SCES, in conjunction with Head Teachers, has developing a new document to support Catholic schools in their school evaluation and planning processes. Look out for this new document which will be available early in 2016 and be ready to discuss at a Parent Council meeting how parents can be fully involved in its use.

4. Dates for Your Diary

Details of these events will be available on the SCES website:

- Saturday 6th February: Cardinal Winning Lecture on Catholic Education - University of Glasgow
- Saturday 5th March: Catholic Education Commission Meeting – Pastoral Centre, Dundee
- Saturday 18th June: Catholic Education Commission Meeting – Glasgow

Please don’t hesitate to get in touch about these or other matters.

Tony Coultas

Chair

SCES Parental Involvement Working Group

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