



Catholic Education Commission Parental Involvement Working Group



The Catholic Church has always taken seriously the need to provide school education that takes account of parents' wishes for the best education possible for their children, education that is based in the values of Christ and is genuinely Christian.

The Church provides support for Catholic schools in different ways – through the provision of chaplains to schools, through parish involvement in schools, through the appointment of Catholic representatives on Parent Councils, through the involvement of Bishops in Holy See Congregations that have an involvement in education, through the diocesan provision of specific people and resources for education, through representation on local authority committees on education.

The Catholic Church also provides support in areas of Scotland where there are no Catholic schools. Here parishes and catechists provide a real support by ensuring that children and young people receive an education in faith – in the sacraments and the practice of the Church, in the values that Christ teaches us, in how to put into action what we believe.

There are two particular bodies that have key roles in the supporting Catholic education:

The **Catholic Education Commission (CEC)** is the body established by the Bishops of Scotland in 1972 to take forward the common interests of the Bishops in all matters relating to education. While each Bishop is responsible for trying to ensure that education provision meets the needs of the Catholic community within each local diocese, there are also broad issues of national significance. The purpose of the Catholic Education Commission, led by its President Bishop, is to focus on these broad issues, advise on general policy principles and help the Bishops to take forward action at a national level. The Commission has developed national advice on issues such as the Approval of Teachers, Shared Campus schools, etc. The Parental Involvement Working Group has been established by the Catholic Education Commission to provide increased support for parental involvement in Catholic schools.

The **Scottish Catholic Education Service (SCES)** is the operational arm of the Catholic Education Commission, first established in 2003 to provide the day to day support that is needed to ensure that Catholic education in Scotland continues to flourish. In the past 10 years, working from small office in Glasgow, and funded by the Church, SCES has developed information, advice and resources for Catholic schools and parishes across all eight Dioceses. Under its Director, Michael McGrath, SCES is recognised by the Scottish Government and by various agencies as the Church's voice on education in Scotland. More importantly, SCES is recognised by teachers and Headteachers as a vital and trusted source of support which is readily available to them. SCES provides resources for Catholic Education, e.g., This is Our Faith – the Catholic RE curriculum, Shining the Light of Christ – a guide to self-evaluation for Catholic schools. There are lots more resources on the SCES website www.sc.es.uk.com

The Parental Involvement Working Group

There was an ad-hoc Group of parents and others working for a period of 18 months to get things moving e.g., to carry out an initial survey of Parent Councils (see the Winter 2011 edition of the SCES Newsletter at www.sces.uk.com/newsletter.html) and hold a First Assembly of Catholic Parent Councils in August 2012. The Parental Involvement Working Group (the Group) was formally established in 2013 to provide increased support to parents, and particularly to Parent Councils, of Catholic schools. There are 17 members of the Group who come from all over Scotland – all 8 Dioceses are represented and the members have been approved by their Bishops. The members of the Group are members of Parent Councils of both Primary and Secondary schools. The Group is just getting started with its work and intends to meet about 4 times a year.

The remit of the Group is:

- to provide advice to the Catholic Education Commission on all appropriate matters
- to promote a vision of what it means to be the “first educators” of children
- to enable and encourage parents to play their full part, in partnership with schools and parishes, in developing Catholic schools as communities of faith and learning, as reflected in the Charter for Catholic Schools in Scotland

The initial actions for the Group are:

1. to establish network to ensure that advice captures breadth of parent views
2. to deepen understanding of what it means to be a parent in a Catholic school
3. to encourage Parent Councils to include a very clear reference to Catholic ethos in their constitutions
4. to identify and share examples of good practice in home-school-parish partnership
5. to help parents to encourage the ‘lived experience of faith’ in their homes through shared prayers and through visible symbols of our Christian faith
6. to develop parental toolkit on what it means to be ‘first educator’
7. to support the development of resources for parents to complement the use of ‘This is Our Faith’ and the teaching of religious education

The Group will compile a list of questions and answers that will be useful for Parent Councils - questions covering the legal basis for Catholic schools, how well Catholic schools perform, who is responsible for maintaining the Catholic ethos of a school, etc. If you have any questions that you wish answered, please e-mail these to the e-mail address below.

Contact the Parental Involvement Working Group by e-mailing parents@sces.uk.com