

THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE BISHOPS OF SCOTLAND WITH REGARDS TO THE APPOINTMENT OF SENIOR LEADERS and TEACHERS OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION WITHIN CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

The 1918 Education (Scotland) Act, and subsequent related legislation, states that a teacher can only be appointed to a post within a denominational school provided they

“satisfy the Secretary of State as to qualification, and are approved as regards their religious belief and character by representatives of the church or denominational body in whose interest the school has been conducted”ⁱ

It is a requirement for appointment that the teacher is both qualified AND approved. An appointment to a post cannot be made if either of these provisions is not fulfilled.

Approval to teach in a denominational School must be obtained from the denominational body for “any post”. The Roman Catholic diocese where a Catholic school is located is the denominational body in whose interest the Local Authority hold, maintain and manage Catholic schools in Scotland. Therefore, applicants for any post within a Catholic school must be approved by the Bishop of the Diocese in order to be appointed.ⁱⁱ

The Distinctive Nature of the Catholic School

“First and foremost every Catholic educational institute is a place to encounter the living God who in Jesus Christ reveals his transforming love and truth”

Pope Benedict XVIⁱⁱⁱ

Catholic schools are communities of faith and learning whose educational vision is based upon the beliefs, values and practices of the Catholic Church. They are not just a social endeavour, but have a theological foundation^{iv} and are one of the means by which the Catholic Church carries out her Salvific Mission^v. “The faith mission of the Catholic school is explicit not only in its religious education programmes but in all aspects of the school’s life,”^{vi}. This integral approach to faith and teaching, mission and pedagogy, means that there is no separation between learning and formation^{vii} and “experiences which are influenced by the school's faith character.”^{viii}

The Distinctive Nature of the Catholic Educator

“Instruction and education in a Catholic school must be based on the principles of Catholic doctrine, and the teachers must be outstanding in true doctrine and uprightness of life”

The Code of Canon Law 803,2

A vision of education inspired by Jesus Christ and rooted in the faith practice of the Catholic Church, is the foundation of the Catholic school’s learning and the hallmark of its ethos. The capacity of the school to achieve its educational aims and offer parents and pupils an authentic experience of Church “depends not so much on subject matter or methodology as on the people who work there”^{ix}. The Sacred Congregation for Education affirms that “by their witness and behaviour, teachers are of the first importance to impart a distinctive character to Catholic schools”^x. This approach of an “integral education of the human person through a clear educational project of which Christ is at the centre”^{xi} has implications for those teaching within Catholic schools.

While not all teachers appointed to a Catholic school will be Catholic, every teacher is required to participate to some extent in the faith life and mission of the school. The Sacred Congregation for Education states that: “The task of a teacher goes well beyond transmission of knowledge.”^{xii} There is therefore a unique role for Catholic educators and those entrusted by the Church to particular leadership roles. They are required to be competent, convinced and coherent educators who, through their role, reflect the **one** Teacher, Jesus Christ.^{xiii}

“The Lay Catholic educator is a person who exercises a specific mission within the Church by living, in faith, a secular vocation in the communitarian structure of the school”.^{xiv}

**Lay Catholics in Schools: Witnesses to Faith,
Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education 1982, No.24**

“As a visible manifestation of the faith they profess and the life witness they are supposed to manifest, it is important that lay Catholics who work in a Catholic school participate simply and actively in the liturgical and sacramental life of the school...In today's secularized world, students will see many lay people who call themselves Catholics, but who never take part in liturgy or sacraments. It is very important that they also have the example of lay adults who take such things seriously.”

**Lay Catholics in Schools: Witnesses to Faith,
Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education 1982, No.40**

In defining the role that the Catholic teacher has within the Catholic school, it is not intended “to ignore or minimize the significant accomplishments of Christians who belong to other Churches, or of non-Christians, in the field of education,”^{xv} but rather to express the unique and distinctive theological role^{xvi} that Catholic teachers have in achieving the mission of the Catholic school.

The Head Teacher is the chief catechist within the school, and entrusted by the Church to ensure that the school carries out its faith mission.^{xvii} Staff with responsibility for teaching Religious Education and leading the Catholic school faith community are called to demonstrate living witness in their own lives and share their own understanding and experience of faith to explain or deepen the learning for pupils in the four dimensions of Christian life: *faith professed, faith celebrated, faith lived and faith prayed.*^{xviii} These theological roles, marked by the exercise of a personal vocation in the Church, and not simply by the exercise of a profession^{xix}, cannot be accomplished by those who are not in communion with the Magisterium of the Church.^{xx}

In light of Church Doctrine and current guidance from the Catholic Education Commission, the Bishops' Conference of Scotland insist that, as a minimum requirement, the posts of headteacher or principal, deputy headteacher or deputy principal and teacher of religious education are to be filled by practising Catholics.^{xxi}

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- ⁱ http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1980/44/pdfs/ukpga_19800044_en.pdf - Part I Section 21, 2(i)
- ⁱⁱ <https://sces.org.uk/church-approval/> Guidance For Teachers Seeking Approval: Scottish Catholic Education Service
- ⁱⁱⁱ Address to Catholic to catholic Educators, Washington DC, 17th April 2008
- ^{iv} The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium, Congregation for Catholic Education, 1997, No 18
- ^v The Catholic School, Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education 1977, para 8
- ^{vi} This Is Our Faith, Guidance on the teaching of religious education in Catholic schools, Bishops' Conference of Scotland 2011, section 1 – pg 8
- ^{vii} The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium, Congregation for Catholic Education, 1997, No 14
- ^{viii} <https://www.gov.scot/publications/curriculum-for-excellence-religious-observance/> para 24
- ^{ix} The Catholic School, Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education 1977, para.43
- ^x Lay Catholics in Schools: Witnesses to Faith, Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education 1982, No. 76
- ^{xi} The Catholic school on the Threshold of the Third Millennium, Congregation for Catholic Education, 1997, No. 4
- ^{xii} Lay Catholics in Schools: Witnesses to Faith, Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education 1982, No.16
- ^{xiii} The Catholic school on the Threshold of the Third Millennium, Congregation for Catholic Education, 1997, No. 14
- ^{xiv} To summarize:with the best possible professional qualifications, with an apostolic intention inspired by faith, for the integral formation of the human person, in a communication of culture, in an exercise of that pedagogy which will give emphasis to direct and personal contact with students, giving spiritual inspiration to the educational community of which he or she is a member, as well as to all the different persons related to the educational community. To this lay person, as a member of this community, the family and the Church entrust the school's educational endeavour.
- Lay Catholics in Schools: Witnesses to Faith, Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education 1982. No.24**
- ^{xv} Lay Catholics in Schools: Witnesses to Faith, Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education 1982, No. 1
- ^{xvi} cf Lay Catholics in Schools: Witnesses to Faith, Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education 1982, No.2
- ^{xvii} Having Faith in the Curriculum, Catholic Education Commission, 2011, Introduction
- ^{xviii} cf This Is Our Faith, Section 3, The Person of the Teacher pg 58
- ^{xix} Lay Catholics in Schools: Witnesses to Faith, Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education 1982, No. 37
- ^{xx} Lay Catholics in Schools: Witnesses to Faith, Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education 1982, No. 18
- ^{xxi} Note on terminology: Whilst these titles have traditionally been used in schools other senior leadership posts, and terminology, have come about in practice, often as a result of collaborative working arrangements between schools. Terms which are being used more frequently include: executive headteacher, associate headteacher and head of school. The principle to be applied is that this minimum requirement will apply to **the most senior leadership post** i.e. the person with overall responsibility for the day to day management of the school and the person who is **the second most senior person** in the leadership team and any **post with responsibility for teaching Religious Education.**