

# Guidelines for the Induction of New Principals to the Catholic School



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12 December 2012

## What is different about Catholic Schools?

When you walk into a school you immediately get a ‘feel’ about the place - it could be the way the school looks, the way you are welcomed or the friendliness of the learners. This is called the Ethos of the school.

Ethos defines and displays the core beliefs of the school, and is closely linked to its value system. This ethos should be reflected in the school’s mission statement, which is the beacon for all school activities. It is the school’s way of ‘being in the world.’

The school’s ethos should be a lived experience for the whole school community and is realised by the daily interactions in the school. However, this needs to be actively understood and promoted in practical ways.

## Key characteristics of a Catholic School

- Everyone is welcome. No-one is excluded. There is no discrimination because all human beings are created in the image of God and are therefore good.
- It has a strong value system based on Gospel values with Christ as the centre of the school.
- It is a faith community that fosters positive relationships among learners, teachers and parents.
- The religious atmosphere fosters formation of the whole child. Worship and prayer are integral and central to school life.
- Everyone has the right to be treated with dignity and must treat others the same.
- The Catholic school resists individualism. It is concerned about justice and the well being of the whole community – we are our sisters and brothers keepers.
- The best is expected from learners because teachers believe in them.
- Clear standards of behaviour from all members of the school community are defined and expected.
- A sense of social responsibility based on Gospel values is fostered. This helps learners to become worthwhile citizens who will hopefully make a difference to society.
- The school should provide a broad curriculum which is meaningful to students and relevant to their community.
- School leadership should develop positive student and staff morale and give priority to people.
- Collaborative decision-making is encouraged, and the gifts of each individual recognised.
- Parental involvement and collaboration is vital for a true community to develop.

## Introduction

These guidelines cover two categories of newly appointed principals: those who are new to the Catholic school and those who have prior experience of working in a Catholic school. However, they focus on principals in the first category. Some suggestions for those in the second category are offered in a separate section at the end.

The process of induction has two components: orientation and establishment. Orientation can be thought of as providing bearings and reference points for those new to the position of principal and new to the Catholic school and the idea of Catholic education. Establishment is about the growing familiarity, confidence, and competence that a new principal begins to show over time as they come to terms with their position and its responsibilities. They should be supported in this process by the local Catholic Schools' Board and local Catholic Schools' Proprietors' Association, along with the Catholic Schools Office or Regional CIE Office. However, the key structure in their induction is the Principals' Forum which will assign a suitable mentor to the newly appointed principal. This body will monitor and discuss the reports brought to it by the mentor and the newly appointed principal.

## Rationale

There are a number of key aims to the induction of the newly appointed principal who is both new to the position and new to the Catholic school. These include:

- familiarising the principal with the history, charism, and ethos of the school. Each Catholic school's ethos includes a set of practices, values, and behaviours. The intention, here, is to introduce the principal to the forms of life encouraged within the school so that they are able uphold, lead, and participate in these.
- assisting the principal to become familiar with the school environment and their leadership role within the school community.
- introducing the principal to the status of the school (public school on private property with a distinctive religious character or independent), the school's Owner (Bishop or Religious Congregation), Catholic education school structures, and the idea of Catholic education.
- enabling the principal's transition into their new role so that they are able to be fully effective as quickly as possible
- supporting the principal's professional development enabling them to continue to improve their skills of leadership and management.
- less directly, providing support to the school in its transition from one principal to another.

## Suggested Policy Framework

Catholic education structures – the school and its governance body, the Owner, the Regional CIE Office or Catholic Schools' Office, and the Principals' Forum – all have a part to play in the induction process of the newly appointed principal. Some aspects of this process are introduced with each of its components in the sections below. At a minimum, all newly appointed principals should be introduced to the idea of Catholic education, Catholic school structures, and the history, charism, and ethos of the school to which they are appointed. In addition, the Principals' Forum, with the awareness of the Regional CIE Office, or Catholic Schools' Office, and the Owner,

must allocate an experienced and suitable principal to mentor the newly appointed principal. The duration of the induction process, except where the newly appointed principal is familiar both with the Catholic school and has prior experience of the role of principal, should take place over a 9-12 month period, commencing from the time of appointment.

The Principals' Forum should select a mentor on the basis of the strength of that person's own school leadership, experience, particular area of expertise, proven ability to uphold the Catholic ethos in their own school, a sense that they will be able to work helpfully with newly appointed principals (i.e. have appropriate personal qualities and relational skills), and because this experience will be of value to their own personal and professional development. In addition, it may be an advantage, where possible, to choose a mentor whose own school shares a similar history, charisma, and ethos to the school of the newly appointed principal. The mentor needs to acknowledge that their role will require regular communication with the new principal. Further, to encourage an element of reciprocity and dialogue, the mentorship process must include visits by each to the other's school.

When a prospective principal is interviewed for a post at the school, they need to be informed that:

- the school is a Catholic school (either 'independent' or 'public school on private property with a distinctive religious character')
- they will need to uphold the ethos of the school
- that this ethos, while distinctly Catholic, is open and hospitable to all in the school community
- religious observance in the form of prayer, assemblies, and liturgical celebrations is integral to the life of the school community
- Religious Education is part of the curriculum of the school – and that they need to see that it is timetabled and adequately staffed
- should they be offered the principalship they will be required to go through an induction process, recognise their responsibility to the Owner (Bishop or Religious Congregation) of the school, become a member of the regional Principal's Forum, and participate in the mentorship arrangements made, in consultation with them, by the Forum

## Suggested Induction Process

### ORIENTATION

All newly appointed principals will take part in an orientation. This includes:

- A. **An introduction to Catholic education** – some history, some profiling of Catholic schools and founding congregations within the diocese / region / country, the importance of ethos in the life of the school, and the place of Religious Education in the curriculum of the school. It also includes developing an awareness of the place of Catholic schools within the South African education system, the policy frameworks that guide the practice of the Catholic school, and the relationship between the school and Catholic education structures. Aspects of this can be done by the Principals' Forum, the Owner (Bishop or Religious Congregation), and the Regional Catholic Institute of Education Office or local Catholic Schools' Office.
- B. **An introduction to the school** – its ethos, policies, and procedures. Ideally, this would be done by the outgoing principal, together with the owner and the chairperson of either the School Governing Body or Board of Governors. It may also include a deputy or senior teacher where either hold a particularly strong understanding of the school's history and ethos. Elements that need, as a minimum, to be included are:

- introducing the newly appointed principal to the school community (staff, students, parents, SGB or Board members where / as possible)
- introducing the newly appointed principal to the ethos of the school in relation to an outline of the school's history
- the responsibility of the principal, together with the staff, to uphold the ethos of the school
- an understanding of the Catholic identity of the school, but in relation to the way this Catholic identity must be hospitable to and value all who are part of the school community
- introducing the principal to the local Catholic Schools' Board, Regional CIE Office or Catholic Schools' Office, and Principals' Forum
- familiarisation with the school calendar along with the array of activities, routines, and meetings that constitute an important part of the on-going life of the school

In addition to the above, a number of areas important to the principal's leadership role in the school will need to be touched on – even if many of these will form the substance of the discussions between the new principal and their mentor. These include (in no particular order):

- Teaching and learning
- School governance
- School leadership and school improvement
- Administration and finance
- School safety and site management
- Staff matters – workload allocation, responsibilities and routines, meetings and training, on-going professional development
- Learner health and wellbeing, behaviour and attendance

### **ESTABLISHMENT**

To enable the newly appointed principal to establish him / herself in their leadership role within the school he / she should:

- participate in on-going orientation activities
- have regular semi-formal meetings with their mentor. Each should keep (informal) notes of these meetings as a basis for verbal or written reports to the owner.
- agree with the owner (or their representative) on one or two initial meetings at which the mentor would, ideally, be present. Thereafter, the principal and owner will decide how to take this arrangement forward.

- an opportunity, if necessary, after term 1, for the newly appointed principal to confirm with the Principals' Forum that the present mentor will continue in this role, or to negotiate with the Forum for another, preferred mentor for the rest of the induction programme
- the identification of areas for on-going professional development

During the establishment component, the role of the mentor is to provide general advice and assistance to the newly appointed principal, along with professional support. To facilitate this, the new principal and mentor need to:

- monitor key areas of the new principal's work – with regard to planning and implementation and reporting – with governance structures; meetings, agendas, reports; finances; school management team; curriculum; ethos; school year plan
- identify and discuss challenges that arise, and, where necessary, develop an appropriate support programme.
- arrange opportunities to visit each other's schools and to discuss observations. A programme for these visits should be agreed on beforehand.
- consider on-going professional development needs and identify opportunities for improving leadership knowledge and skills – workshops, conferences, affiliation to a professional body, etc.
- make sure that arrangements for regular meetings are agreed on, and that these take place
- collect information on which reports to the Principals' Forum can be based

At the end of the induction process, new principal and mentor will present a final report to the owner. Part of the report – and part of the discussion in this meeting – will concern the goals and timelines for on-going professional development. The principal should place a copy of this in their personal file.

If, however, during the establishment component it emerges that the newly appointed principal is struggling to adapt to the school environment and their professional responsibilities, the mentor needs to inform the owner. Thereafter, the mentor together with the owner, will decide on support measures for the principal. This process will be closely monitored until sufficient improvement in performance has been made.

## **Newly appointed principals with experience of a Catholic school**

Newly appointed principals who have experience of working in a Catholic school will need to have their orientation shaped in accordance with this. This largely depends on whether they are familiar with the distinctive history, charism, and ethos associated with the school in which they have been appointed principal, or whether their experience has been with another Catholic school. However, these principals will also be expected to participate in orientation activities arranged by the Regional Catholic Institute of Education Office or local Catholic Schools' Office. They will also be expected to participate fully in the activities of the regional Principals' Forum and any mentorship arrangements offered to them by this Forum.

The newly appointed principal and their mentor should be encouraged to share developments and challenges with the Forum and the Regional Coordinator of the Regional Catholic Institute of Education or the Coordinator of the local Catholic Schools' Office. If necessary, these bodies may need to put additional supportive measures in place.

### APPENDIX

#### A Checklist for Newly Appointed Principals

This checklist is simply an aid to memory, a help in locating important information, and an assist to the mentorship process as you become familiar with your school, its ethos, Catholic education structures, and circuit and district Provincial education structures.

##### Pre-appointment

You should have received: an introductory letter from the chairperson of the school's Board of Governors, an introductory letter from the school's Owner (Bishop / Religious Congregation), your job description, school prospectus / calendar, and School Improvement Plan...

##### Post-appointment

You should have received a letter of appointment, contract, ... (policy file / handbook / pack – from Principals' Forum)?

##### Some information and guidance should be available from:

- Local Catholic Schools' Office or Regional Catholic Institute of Education Office
- National Catholic Institute of Education Office
- National Religious Education Department, Catholic Institute of Education
- The Owner (Bishop or Religious Congregation)
- Catholic Schools' Proprietors' Association
- Local Catholic Schools' Proprietors' Association
- Regional Catholic Principals' Forum
- A mentor designated to you by the Principals' Forum

##### Personal Administration

- Your diary
- Latest self-evaluation form
- Induction Programme Schedule – events, meetings with mentor, meetings with owner, reciprocal school visits, networking & relationship building
- Principals' Forum dates

##### School Administration

- Key contacts: staff names, telephone numbers, and address list; priest, municipality (water & light), social welfare, school counselling...; local government schools; emergency contacts – police, ambulance, fire station, education department...
- School log book
- School critical incident (manual / log book)
- Daily staff register
- Daily learner attendance register
- School statistical returns to Department (annual)
- School statistical returns to the Catholic Institute of Education (annual)
- School data and performance
- School prospectus, school calendar (school meetings / key gatherings & liturgical celebrations), and school profile (including historical background, catchment area, demography, description of ethos)
- School website
- School policy documents
- Insurance
- Data protection
- Visitors (access to premises / badges / signing in)
- General information and procedures – in school
- Site tour with caretaker
- Plans of the school: internal / external
- School organisation: school hours, playtime(s) etc
- School entrance and car parking
- School holiday dates, occasional days, training days
- Links to partner schools, local business, community, specific projects
- Financial information, last year's outturn figures/budget planning processes
- Latest self-evaluation form
- School Development Plan and progress on the action plan
- Report on ethos and ethos evaluation
- Systems to support school improvement and self-evaluation

**School safety and site management**

- Duty roster
- Maintenance
- Arrangements re contracts for repair or building
- Familiarity with school environment and municipal surrounds / neighbourhood
- Emergency procedures – safety drills (bombs or fire), first aid
- Safeguarding
- Permission to close school

**SACBC & CaSPA policy requirements**

- SACBC endorsed policy for Religious Education, Fostering Hope
- Integrity in Ministry
- CaSPA required Child Safeguarding Policy
- CaSPA: Ethos Evaluation Process – Signs of God’s Presence
- CaSPA: RE Validation Process
- CaSPA: Deeds of Agreement & Schedule on Distinctive Religious Character

**State & Departmental requirements**

- South African Schools’ Act
- Religion & Education Policy

**School policies & processes**

- Vision & Mission Statement
- School Development Plan
- RE Policy (including collective worship)
- Disciplinary policy & procedure
- Learner Representative Council policy & procedure
- Admissions policy
- Complaints policy (general)
- Special education needs policy
- Sex education policy
- Exclusion policy and procedures
- Code of Conduct
- School trip arrangements

**Parents / Guardians / Caregivers**

- Introduction to school ethos and curriculum of school (incl. RE)
- Partnership agreement
- Consultation arrangements
- Friends / PTA / parents’ group / class representatives etc
- Dealing with parental concerns and complaints

**Staff HR / Personnel**

- Communications: staff briefing, notice board, minutes, agendas, newsletter, day book etc
- Induction processes for new teachers
- On-going professional development (continuing professional development)
- Labour relations matters
- Salaries & pay structures
- Staff recruitment
- Staff contracts (including responsibility to uphold the religious ethos of the school)
- Generic job descriptions & special responsibilities for teachers, administrative, & maintenance staff
- Performance management – teachers – policy, procedures and timetable
- School-based staff development: ethos, RE, planning days, retreats, etc.
- Staff dress code
- Staff duties & rosters
- Management of absence procedure
- Staff library / Circulation of magazines, periodicals, etc.
- School committees



- Staff list (teaching, administrative, and maintenance), structure, roles and responsibilities
- Staff personal details, home mobile phone numbers / email addresses
- Staffroom
- Supply teacher list, contact numbers, agency contact details (Ealing Teaching Personnel Gateway)
- Volunteer helpers (list, contact numbers)
- Staff at risk (allergies, epilepsy, on-going medical conditions)
- Safer recruitment, criminal records check procedures

### Governing body – SGB or Board

- Governing body membership list (including responsibilities)
- Schedule of meetings, access to agendas & minutes of full body and committees; schedule for reporting (e.g. principals' report)
- Committees (e.g. finance, fund raising, premises) & terms of reference for each
- Policy and Law pertaining to this body – and policy and law this body needs to be aware of
- Communication with school community
- Orientation for new members / Capacity building
- Election procedures

### Learners

- Admissions and term time pupil transfer
- Accident procedures
- Arrangements for class groupings
- Assemblies
- Absence reporting
- Children's forum / consultation mechanisms
- Child protection / safeguarding (policy and processes)
- Classroom expectation
- Toilets & washrooms
- Homework
- Lost property
- Medicals
- Medical room
- Out of class: playground / playtime
- Register and attendance procedures
- Rewards and sanctions
- Rules
- School library
- School meals
- School outings (educational visits) and journeys
- Special needs – accessibility plan, curricular support, orphans and vulnerable children, pregnancy
- Wet day procedures (playtimes / lunchtimes)
- Children with court orders, medical support, in care

### Teaching and Learning

- Assessment policy and guidelines
- School language policy & support structures
- Classroom organisation and display; guidelines
- Curriculum guidelines
- Curriculum policies
- Homework policy and procedures
- Records
- Reports
- School development / improvement plan – including academic improvement (literacy and maths and other learning programmes – including RE)
- Teaching and learning policy
- Special education needs policy
- Sex education policy
- Inclusion (re race, class, gender, language, disability, anti-bullying...)
- Academic support
- Timetable / directed time / homework classes

