

Guidelines for the Induction of New Teachers



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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

It is the ascription of ‘new’ that qualifies groups and individuals for induction: newness to a particular Catholic school, newness to the experience (more generally) of Catholic education, newness to the teaching profession, and newness to a particular position in a school and its accompanying responsibilities. These guidelines cover two categories of teachers new to the Catholic school: those new to the teaching profession, and those already with some school-teaching experience.

In contrast, those responsible for induction, for whichever group or individual, have been working as teachers in a particular Catholic school community. They have become established in their role, show competence in their responsibilities, and are familiar with the idea of Catholic education and its network. They have reached a point in their professional development where they can be entrusted with accompanying others just setting out on their journey.

A useful way to understand induction is to consider it as a process with two components: orientation and establishment.

- **Orientation** can be thought of as providing those new to the teaching profession and to the Catholic school with bearings and reference points.
- **Establishment** is about the growing familiarity, confidence, and competence that a new teacher begins to show over time as they come to terms with their profession, position, and responsibilities with regard to their learners and fellow teachers, the curriculum, routines and activities, and the ethos which upholds the everyday life of the school.

To help the new teacher in this process, the role of a mentor is key.

Rationale

There are several aims to the induction of the teacher new to the Catholic school. These include:

- familiarising teachers with the ethos of the school. Each Catholic school's ethos includes a set of practices, values, and behaviours that the new teacher is expected to participate in. The intention, here, is to introduce the new teacher to the forms of life encouraged within the school so that they are able to contribute to the work of the school and also come to be accepted and valued as staff members within the school community.
- encouraging and enabling the new teacher to successfully adapt to their environment and the role they are appointed to within the school.
- a formative appraisal, written up as a report at the end of the induction process, in which directions for further professional development are identified and agreed on.

In the case of teachers who are also new to the profession, the following are also relevant:

- recognising that new teachers bring with them their own experiences of school and teacher education – and that they are able to offer something of value to the school. Thus, the induction process must include space for dialogue, and be open to the contribution that a newly appointed teacher can bring to their teaching, their colleagues, and the school community.
- recognising the transition of the newly qualified teacher from pre-service teacher education to on-going professional formation.

Suggested Policy Framework

Catholic schools are encouraged to have an induction policy for new teachers in place. Newly qualified teachers should go through the full induction process – orientation and establishment, and this should take place over a three-term or 9 month period, commencing from the time of appointment. The principal may decide on a shortened programme in the case of experienced teachers who are new to the Catholic school. In the case of short-term relief teachers (i.e. less than two school terms), the principal may only require that they undergo the orientation phase.

The principal must allocate an experienced teacher to mentor the newly appointed teacher. This could happen under the supervision of the deputy principal, particularly where this person is responsible for the management of the curriculum within the school, or delegated to a head of department with responsibility for a particular phase or area of the curriculum (as appropriate). In addition, the principal must ensure that time is available for new teachers to meet on a regular basis with their mentors. Likewise, the mentor will need to be able to carry out some lesson observations. (In order to introduce an element of reciprocity and dialogue into the induction process, it is strongly recommended that the newly appointed teacher be required to

observe lessons taught by their mentor and to have some discussion of their observations with their mentor.)

The school, perhaps through its school management team, needs to identify potential mentors and the principal or deputy need take steps to ensure that these teachers are adequately briefed and prepared for their task. Mentors may be selected on the basis of the strength of their own classroom teaching, curriculum knowledge, a sense that they will be able to work helpfully with new teachers (i.e. have appropriate personal qualities and relational skills), and because this experience will be of value to their own development and the possibility of future promotion.

When a prospective teacher 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
- they will need to be supportive of the various components of the school’s Religious Education Programme – its liturgical and assembly programmes, for example – and may be required to teach Religious Education
- should they be offered a post, they will be required to go through an induction process

Suggested Induction Process

ORIENTATION

All newly appointed teachers will take part in the orientation component of the induction process. 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, and the policy frameworks that guide the practice of the Catholic school. Aspects of this can be done by the school and / or, by agreement, the Regional Catholic Institute of Education Office or local Catholic Schools’ Office. It will typically occur early in the first term – perhaps before teaching commences. These offices

may, with the agreement of the schools, hold further activities of an orientation nature at regular intervals. For teachers appointed later in the year, this will either be done at their school, or perhaps held over until they are able to attend the Regional Catholic Institute of Education Office or local Catholic Schools' Office programme.

B. An introduction to the school – its ethos, policies, and procedures. This is the responsibility of the principal (or designated deputy principal or head of department) and takes place within the school. Aspects of this phase will be shaped by the needs of the newly appointed teacher/s. However, the initial meeting should take place before the academic year begins. Elements that need, as a minimum, to be included are:

- introducing the newly appointed teacher to the school community (staff, students, parents, School Governing Body or Board of Governors members where / as possible)
- introducing the newly appointed teacher to the ethos of the school in relation to an outline of the school's history
- introducing the newly appointed teacher to school structures, policies, and procedures

- the responsibility of each staff member 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 all who are part of the school community
- a briefing on the full induction process
- clarity concerning expectations that the school has of the teacher – their roles in relation to school assemblies, participation in extra-mural activities, the classes and areas of the school's curriculum that they will be responsible for

ESTABLISHMENT

The second component to the induction process is establishment. This concerns the growing involvement of the newly appointed teacher in the life of the school, and their adaptation to their curricular responsibilities. Aspects of these include:

- participation in on-going orientation activities
- regular semi-formal meetings of the mentor with the newly-appointed teacher – every two weeks for term 1 and as negotiated thereafter. The mentor should keep (informal) notes of these meetings.
- one or two meetings between the newly appointed teacher, their mentor, and head of department / deputy principal / principal (depending on school procedure) during the course of the induction process. Formal notes need to be kept of these meetings.
- An opportunity, if necessary, after term 1, for the newly appointed teacher to confirm that the present mentor will continue in this role, or to negotiate with the principal for another, preferred mentor for the rest of the induction programme.
- The identification of areas for the on-going professional development of the newly appointed teacher.

During the establishment component, the role of the mentor teacher is to provide general advice and assistance to the newly appointed teacher, along with professional support. This includes:

- monitoring planning, teaching, and assessment in the grade or curricular areas that the newly appointed teacher is responsible for
 - identifying and discussing with the new teacher, challenges that arise, and, where necessary, developing an appropriate support programme
 - arranging opportunities for the newly appointed teacher to observe some lessons taught by the mentor and to provide an opportunity to discuss observations
 - arranging for classroom visits, including at least two formal lesson observations (using an observation sheet); more observations may be scheduled if these are considered necessary
 - identifying, with the newly appointed teacher, opportunities for improving the teacher's knowledge and skills - workshops, conferences, affiliation with a union or professional association, and so on
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- making sure that arrangements for regular meetings (as suggested above) with the new teacher are agreed on, and that these take place
 - collecting information on which the induction report and the agreement on areas of on-going professional development will be based. Signs of growing involvement in the life of the school, evidence of good practice, and improvement or growth in the carrying out of professional responsibilities should be carefully sought and noted. These are important indicators of the developmental intention of the induction process.

At the end of the induction process, the mentor will complete a report, in consultation with the newly appointed teacher. This report will be then be discussed at a meeting with the new teacher, their mentor, the head of department or deputy principal (where one or the other was involved), and the principal. Part of the report – and part of the discussion in this meeting – will concern the agreed on goals and timelines for on-going professional development. (This will be the basis for on-going formative appraisal in schools that have this in place.) The report, together with the agreed on goals and timelines for future professional learning, will be placed in the teacher’s file at the school. The teacher will be given a copy for their personal file.

If, however, during the establishment component it emerges that the newly appointed teacher is struggling to adapt to the school environment and their professional responsibilities, the mentor needs to inform the principal. Thereafter, the mentor together with the principal and other key staff (e.g. the deputy principal or a head of department) will decide on support measures for the teacher. This process will be closely monitored until sufficient improvement in performance has been made. Where progress remains unsatisfactory due process procedures (re probation / dismissal / report on file / written warning) may be implemented.

Experienced teachers new to the Catholic school

As indicated above, experienced teachers need not undergo a full induction process. However, they will be expected to participate in the orientation activities – those organised by the Regional Catholic Institute of Education Office or local Catholic Schools’ Office, and those organised within the school. In addition, the experienced teacher and the principal will negotiate the length (e.g. a term) and nature of other aspects of the induction process (e.g. whatever will facilitate the drawing up of the required report, and the nature of this report, together with agreement on aspects of on-going professional development) required.

However, as with teachers new to the profession, should it become evident that the experienced teacher is struggling to meet the school’s expectations, then supportive measures will need to be introduced. If these are not successful, then unsatisfactory due process procedures (re probation / dismissal / report on file / written warning) may be implemented.

APPENDIX

Suggested topics and areas of focus for mentors and newly appointed teachers

A. Suggested checklist of topics to be covered in the induction process

- School procedures including: making of appointments with principal, teacher absence liaison, absent learners, photocopying of materials, playground duties, etc.
- Managing student behaviour
- Homework policy
- Catholic school ethos
- Religious Education Programme – including assemblies, liturgical celebrations, co-curricular activities of a faith or service nature, and Religious Education
- Teaching programs
- School policies
- Pastoral care
- Student-at-risk programmes
- Critical incidents & mandatory reporting

Schools should develop their own list. This should show who is responsible for communicating with the newly-appointed teacher about each section. It could also include a timeline to help manage the process and to ensure that all topics are covered.

B. Suggested areas of focus for mentors and newly appointed teachers

Pedagogical skills:

- Learning programme and lesson preparation (outlines, outcomes, learning activities, assessment – various forms of this including student self-assessment)
- Maintaining class records – attendance register/s, assessment records, report cards (commenting on individual student's progress); progress cards for each learner (school-based)
- Maintaining classroom organisation and developing a good learning environment
- Classroom management and discipline
- Use of voice (pitch, clarity, giving of instructions, questioning skills)
- Use of resources
- Reflection / Self evaluation

Interaction and relationships with members of the school community:

- *Students* – responding positively to individual needs; sensitive to the human dignity of each student; fair / just in response to ; sensitive to diversity (cultural and religious; socio-economic background) and (strategies for giving recognition) and (promoting of) inclusion
- *Parents* – good rapport; timely, sensitive, appropriate communication
- *School management structures and colleagues* - willingness to share ideas, resources and personal strengths; willingness to accept advice; ability to carry out directions and requests; ability to take initiative in consulting with members of the school executive on appropriate courses of action; active participation in staff learning / professional development sessions

Professional and personal qualities:

Speech, dress, commitment, initiative, resourcefulness and self-reliance, integrity, loyalty, dependability, punctuality

Contribution to the Catholic identity of the school community:

- co-operation in implementing the general goals of Catholic Education
- co-operation in implementing school policy and contributing to specific programs
- co-operation and involvement in school activities e.g. clubs, coaching teams, etc
- performance of duties e.g. playground duty, bus supervision, etc
- involvement in staff meetings, planning days, etc

