
**FORMULATING
AN
ETHOS STATEMENT
FOR
CATHOLIC
PRIMARY SCHOOLS**

KILDARE & LEIGHLIN DIOCESE

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ETHOS STATEMENT - PROCESS

An Ethos Statement is a description of the characteristic spirit of a particular school specifying the way in which it expresses and lives its identity and tradition as a Catholic school in response to the precise, evolving and unique circumstances in which it finds itself.

Suggested process for formulation of an Ethos Statement

(Adapted from the CPSMA Board of Management Handbook)

The following describes best practice in formulating an Ethos Statement for a Catholic Primary School.

It may take between six and eighteen months to finalise an ethos statement. The ethos statement should be revised at least every four years. The consultation of the whole school community is an extremely important part of the process in order to ensure that all understand and can commit to this statement.

Working Party

- The Board of Management establishes a working party including the principal, the chairperson and one other Board member along with the school chaplain to gather the key elements of an Ethos Statement. These elements are taken from the Schedule for the Catholic School and other relevant documents (charism of religious congregations, 'Vision 08: A Vision for Catholic Education'). These key elements constitute a 'Formation Document'.

Consultation with Board and Staff

- The formation document is then presented to the Board of Management. The Board approves or amends this formation document and then invites all members of the staff (teaching staff and ancillary staff to discuss the approved/amended document.
- The members of the staff either approve or further amend the formation document as presented to them by the board.
- Following the staff consultation the approved/amended formation document is once more discussed by the Board of Management. The Board approves or amends the document further.

Consultation with Parents and Students

- At this stage the amended formation document is forwarded to the school's parents' council/association and the school's students' council for approval, amendment, or additions.
- Following consultation with the parents and the students the Board of Management asks the original working party to prepare a draft ethos statement.

Final Approval

- After approving the draft ethos statement the Board then sends it to the school patron and to the trustees for approval.
- The Board of Management then presents the approved ethos statement to all the school staff, the students and to the parents.

Publication

- The ethos statement is displayed prominently in each classroom and in the public areas of the school. It should be displayed in the school lobby alongside the Schedule.

ETHOS STATEMENT - GUIDELINES

The following information is adapted from the Wellsprings programme material.

An Ethos Statement:

- Is an essential step in the response to the invitation to make the *Schedule* of the Catholic School a living reality.
- Helps build consensus concerning Catholic Identity which in turn enhances ownership of a shared vision of the school's educational ethos.
- Acknowledges the uniqueness of each school.
- Provides a foundation for other ethos related policies such as the Admissions policy and the Religious Education policy.
- Provides the core point of reference for School planning and development, resource allocation and Whole School Evaluation.
- Assists communication with the Patron and Trustees, the parents, the staff and the students.
- Allows the Board to make a medium-term policy response to the evolving social, economic, religious and cultural circumstances in which it finds itself.

The Ethos Statement of a Catholic School has the following headings:

- Title: Ethos Statement
- Name of school
- Period (e.g. 2008 -2013)

INCLUDE *(as relevant)*

- Year of foundation of the school
- School motto
(if your school doesn't have a school motto the formulating of the Ethos Statement provides an ideal opportunity to involve, staff, pupils and parents in creating one)
- School crest
(if your school doesn't have a school crest the formulating of the Ethos Statement provides an ideal opportunity to involve, staff, pupils and parents in creating one)

STATE *(as relevant)*

- '... is a National school under the Patronage of ...'
- '... is under the trusteeship of ...'
- '... is linked to the Catholic parish of ...'
- '... is a co-educational / girls / boys ...'

Core Values of a Catholic Educational Ethos

Write a sentence related to each (draw on the charism of Trustees)

- **HUMAN:**
The school's vision of the development of the child.
- **RELIGIOUS:**
The way in which the school nurtures a living relationship with God and with other people
- **CHRISTIAN:**
The core gospel values expressed in the daily life of the school.
- **CATHOLIC:**
How the school nurtures the faith of its Catholic pupils.

Write a sentence on each of the following:

- Admission policy
- The way the school cooperates with parents.
- Staff development
- The Catholic RE Programme
- Policy concerning Sacramental Preparation
- Values expressed in the Code of Behaviour
- Inclusion and participation of 'minority groups'
- The way the school works with parents concerning the faith formation of non pupils of other religious traditions.

Finally write a sentence on each of the following:

- The areas of excellence in the tradition of the school.
- An invitation to be part of the school community provided you share its values and ethos.

Sample Phrases which might be used in an Ethos Statement

- The policies, practices and attitudes of the school are inspired by the values of the Christian Gospel
- Prayer is a regular feature of the school day. Such prayer uses the resources provided by Catholic tradition and practice while seeking to be inclusive in its expression
- The celebration of the Christian Liturgical Seasons is a part of the rhythm of the school year. Children are offered the opportunity to participate in these celebrations
- Catholic pupils are prepared for the reception of the sacrament of First Confession, First Communion and Confirmation, in accordance with arrangements in the diocese. This occurs in partnership with the family and the parish.
- The school identifies itself with the Parish and Diocesan Communities leading to a sense of the Universal Church whose concern extends to all peoples.
- The school is a centre of excellence where professional standards are maintained and where pupils learn in a safe and happy environment.
- The school collaborates with the home; such active partnership is necessary to lead young people to the fullness of their potential.
- The school's Code of Behaviour reflects the Christian values of forgiveness, reconciliation, new beginnings and hope.
- Teachers are sensitive to the needs and circumstances of each pupil.
- The school recognises the dignity and value of each person. This is reflected in the organisation of the school (including admission and provision policies)