



CEIST

Catholic Education, an Irish Schools Trust

CHARTER

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Catholic Education
An Irish Schools Trust



Foreword

We, the undersigned, Trustees of **CEIST** - a new organisational framework for exercising educational trusteeship - are privileged and pleased to launch and promote **The Charter**, the core document of **CEIST**, articulating its purpose, values and vision, in the mission of carrying our Catholic secondary schools into a new phase of their history.

Catholic education has been at the heart of the Church's mission since Jesus Christ urged his disciples to 'go teach all nations'. The person of Christ, Son of God and Son of Mary, prophet, healer, teacher of wisdom, who is alive and with us, is the core of Catholic education.

Down through the ages, religious men and women have sought to share the Good News of Jesus Christ in ways that informed all academic disciplines. Eventually, as the dream of 'education for all' became possible, congregations of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries in Ireland sought to bring Catholic education to excluded young people of their time. Today, it is readily accessible to all.

The twenty-first century has brought new challenges which require the creation of new structures to ensure that Catholic secondary education is a viable choice in a pluralist Ireland. To this end the *Daughters of Charity*, the *Presentation Sisters*, the *Sisters of the Christian Retreat*, the *Sisters of Mercy*, and the *Missionaries of the Sacred Heart*, have come together to form a designated organisation that will be faithful to the founding intention, hold our traditions and enable our schools to navigate, true to their identity, the next stage of their life journey.

The new organisation is called **CEIST** – *Catholic Education, an Irish Schools Trust*.

The **CEIST**, or question, in the acronym underlines the necessary challenge to query accepted norms, so that in the delivery of quality Catholic education, the values, vision and mission enunciated here are continuously refined and developed. The

Trustees invite the entire **CEIST** community to join with them in seeking to ensure that all our Catholic schools can continue to be centres of excellence in the future.

Finally, we congratulate and sincerely thank all those involved who worked so long and hard in planning and preparing for this project and in setting down its key elements in this *Charter*.

Daughters of Charity Provincial

Catherine Prendergast

Presentation Provincial Leader (N)

Elizabeth Maxwell

Presentation Provincial Leader (SE)

Sr. Blaise Meagher

Presentation Provincial Leader (SW)

Mary Hoare

Sisters of the Christian Retreat

Margaret Buckley

pp Provincial

Mercy Provincial Leader (N)

Sister Ann Marie McQuaid

Mercy Provincial Leader (S)

Donna Conley

Mercy Provincial Leader (W)

Margaret Casey

Mercy Provincial Leader (SC)

Helena O'Donoghue

Missionaries of the Sacred Heart Provincial

Pat Courtney, MSC

Feast of St. Brigid (1st February 2007)

CEIST Vision & Mission Statements

"I have come that they may have life and have it to the full"
Jn. 10:10

Vision

A compassionate and just society inspired by the life and teachings of Jesus Christ.

Mission

To provide a holistic education in the Catholic tradition.

Catholic Education

What is Catholic education?

Catholic education is a lifelong process of human growth and development. It is more than schooling. It begins in the home, continues in the school and matures through involvement with the Christian community in the parish. These three dimensions of home, school and parish must work together if Catholic education is to truly attain its goal of forming mature human persons in the image and likeness of Christ.

Almost two thousand years ago Jesus of Nazareth spoke of the Reign of God as healing for the sick, hearing for the deaf, sight for the blind, freedom for prisoners, good news for the poor. The world is full of real problems; the pain of human experience is obvious. In facing this reality we could turn our backs in despair and throw our hands in the air at the futility of human life. But the call of Christian discipleship demands otherwise. It demands that we always seek to lift the burden. The burdens of life are real and so we need to help each other in:

- opening our eyes to the reality of life
- feeding those who are too weak to feed themselves
- liberating those who are oppressed
- expanding our minds through education
- dispelling our fear of the unknown
- challenging ourselves to let go of hurts and prejudice
- unsealing our ears to hear the divine echo in our hearts
- inspiring hope for the future

In all of these ways the ministry of Jesus is continued as 'the blind see again, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear; the dead are raised to life, the good news is proclaimed to the poor' (Luke 7:22). To teach as Christ taught means inviting people to live without the crutch or the grudge or the closed mind. Catholic education invites people to become Christ-like in their lives so that the Reign of God might continue to dawn in our world.

Catholic schools make an indispensable contribution to Catholic education. While such schools can never replace the home or the parish they have a crucial role to play in the education of the next generation of young people.

What makes a school Catholic?

All schools in the Republic of Ireland hold much in common in terms of structures, curriculum and the centrality of the State examination system. ¹ Every school attempts to serve society in a meaningful way. Yet all schools today find themselves in difficult circumstances due to enormous social, cultural and economic changes. In an age dominated by media and information technology, significant new pressures are brought to bear on adolescents, on family structures, on religious practice, on employment mobility and, not least, on behaviour in the school classroom.

In this new cultural context every Catholic school needs to redefine its identity so that it is not just reacting to the latest trend or fashion but that it can truly articulate its self-understanding. ²

Five characteristics are particularly important:

1. The Catholic school treats every individual human person as a child of God called to share in God's own life forever. ³
2. The Catholic school takes its inspiration from the ministry of Christ.
3. The Catholic school participates in the mission of the Church within the surrounding culture in which it lives and breathes. ⁴
4. The Catholic school is an inclusive community ideally built on love and formed by the interaction and collaboration of its various components: students, parents, teachers, non-teaching staff and members of the Board. ⁵
5. The Catholic school is at the service of society in both a critical and supportive manner. ⁶

Implications of being a Catholic School

- a) Education involves the whole person and so it must deal with the intellectual, moral, religious, physical and psychological development of each student. ⁷
- b) Parents are the primary educators of their children and this responsibility should not be delegated to any other agency. ⁸
- c) Religious education is not a sectarian enterprise but is a core part of a rounded education. ⁹
- d) The Catholic school is part of the Church's pastoral ministry. ¹⁰
- e) Catholic schools should contribute to the life of the parishes and dioceses in which they are located and they have a right to receive support from these Church bodies. ¹¹
- f) Catholic Schools value teaching as one of the most important of all human activities for the teacher does not write on inanimate material, but on the very spirits of human beings. ¹²
- g) Catholic schools should be involved in the dialogue between faith and culture in that the various subjects taught do not present only knowledge to be attained, but also values to be acquired and truths to be discovered. ¹³
- h) Catholic schools should serve those who are poor – either impoverished as a result of social background or impoverished due to lack of values and any sense of the meaning of life. ¹⁴
- i) Catholic schools welcome students from all faith traditions and those of no faith precisely because the schools are Catholic and are thus open to dialogue with the other. ¹⁵
- j) Chaplains, Religious Educators and members of Religious Orders are an important expression of the ecclesial dimension of the school. ¹⁶

- k) Catholic schools willingly participate in the delivery of State curricula, in the preparation of students for the State's examinations and in achieving the highest academic standards. ¹⁷
- l) Schools do not exist primarily for the service of the economy but for the service of the human person who is called to live in solidarity with other persons in search of the common good. ¹⁸
- m) Education cannot be reduced to information or technology but has as its goal the formation of a human person who is free, rational and mature in relationships. ¹⁹



Who we are

Five Catholic Religious Congregations

engaged in post primary education for over three and a half centuries – *Daughters of Charity, Presentation Sisters, Sisters of the Christian Retreat, Sisters of Mercy, Missionaries of the Sacred Heart* – have, in the spirit of their Founders, together established

CEIST – Catholic Education, an Irish Schools Trust,

thus providing a new moral and legal trustee framework enabling their schools to continue to offer post-primary Catholic education into the future as a viable option and as an integral part of the Irish school system.

CEIST is built on the founding vision of the five Congregations, emphasising the dignity and rights of the human person, empowering the most vulnerable in society and enabling young people to become catalysts for social transformation throughout the world.

CEIST is committed to honouring this rich heritage, promoting inclusion, hospitality, excellence and compassion in a teaching and learning environment inspired by the Gospel and by the unique wisdom of its respective Founders.

CEIST aims, in a spirit of collaboration, to continually invite its members to reach their potential, in the context of a school faith community which seeks to consciously embody a true expression of the Reign of God as announced by Jesus Christ.

CEIST is committed to building school faith communities where good personal relationships are fostered, where the staff are supported and facilitated in their vital role within the school.

CEIST faces unprecedented challenges today as it attempts to anticipate, define and meet the evolving needs of young people in the Third Millennium.

CEIST schools endeavour to work closely with members of other Christian traditions in a spirit of ecumenical dialogue, emphasising what is held in common while valuing their own unique Catholic identity and Church community.

CEIST engages with all people of good will to promote a preferential option for those made poor, to take action for justice, and to exercise care of the earth in a spirit of respect and welcome for diversity.



What we treasure

The core values of **CEIST** are intended to support and nourish the lives of the people who are at the heart of our schools - students, staff and parents. These are the members of the school; their rights must be respected and their responsibilities should be performed in a manner which promotes the spiritual development of each person, achieves quality in teaching and learning, shows respect for every person, creates a sense of community and is founded on compassion and justice. These values can only be lived out if students, staff and parents work together for the common good of all. In **CEIST** schools processes should be put in place to deal with areas of conflict and disagreement so that the dignity of all members of the school can be protected.

Promoting Spiritual and Human Development

We believe a knowledge of and a personal relationship with Jesus Christ give meaning and purpose to our lives.

Achieving Quality in Teaching and Learning

We are committed to excellence and to continually improving the quality of teaching and learning.

Showing Respect for Every Person

We respect the unique and intrinsic value of every person.

Creating Community

Our schools are faith communities of welcome and hospitality where Gospel values are lived and where there is special care for those most in need.

Being Just and Responsible

We seek to act justly and responsibly in all our relationships.

Promoting Spiritual and Human Development

We believe a knowledge of and a personal relationship with Jesus Christ give meaning and purpose to our lives.

- a) A **CEIST** school nurtures and supports the spirituality of each person, inspiring them to be fully alive human beings with hope and joy in their lives.
- b) The school is a faith-sharing community rooted in the mission of the Church. It proclaims and lives the Gospel, fostering a personal relationship with God, through Jesus Christ.
- c) The rich diversity of the school community and the spiritual life of each person are celebrated and enhanced through reflection, prayer, the Eucharist and other Sacraments, liturgy, symbols and rituals.
- d) The school recognises the special place of Mary, Mother of God, joyfully celebrating her feasts and finding in her a source of courage and wisdom in dealing with the joys and sorrows of life.
- e) The school provides opportunities for spiritual and personal development.
- f) The full scope of religious education in our schools is to inform, form and transform people in the Catholic faith.
- g) The school actively encourages all its members – staff and students – to reflect on the contemporary world in the light of the Gospel.
- h) Collaboration, co-operation and partnership between home, school, community, parish and diocese are emphasised, encouraged and enabled.
- i) Parents support the faith life of the school by actively upholding the ethos, values and principles of the Charter.
- j) The spirit and values of the Charter are lived in the day-to-day life of the school.
- k) The school nurtures in its students a sense of their cultural identity, an appreciation of the diversity of cultures and a respect for people of other races and religious traditions.



Achieving Quality in Teaching and Learning

We are committed to excellence and to continually improving the quality of teaching and learning.

- a) A **CEIST** school promotes quality and excellence in teaching and learning.
- b) The aim of our curriculum is to educate people to become fully alive and free human beings, conscious of God's presence and grace through the ordinary of life.
- c) Spiritual education, religious and faith formation are at the core of a holistic curriculum.
- d) Students are encouraged to pursue truth, to recognise their own gifts, to care for the common good.
- e) The educational needs of the students are identified and suitable programmes and curricula are provided to meet the breadth of needs identified so that all students can participate with dignity and confidence.
- f) The school is innovative and creative in its response to the needs of the students so that the highest standards are achieved and maintained.
- g) Parents support the quality of teaching and learning by encouraging their children to avail of the opportunities to acquire and develop the skills that will enhance and enrich their lives.
- h) Reflective practice is facilitated at all levels in the system.
- i) The school promotes a culture of on-going professional and personal development.
- j) The school promotes and enables evaluation.
- k) Diligence, good practice and achievement are affirmed and celebrated.



Showing Respect for Every Person

We respect the unique and intrinsic value of every person.

- a) A **CEIST** school acknowledges the dignity of all its members, each formed in the image of God.
- b) A **CEIST** school is open and accessible to all without discrimination. It promotes a positive attitude towards the social inclusion of minority groups and stands in solidarity with those most in need.
- c) A caring, welcoming school promotes a culture of good relationships where people thrive and grow.
- d) Educational programmes delivered through quality teaching and learning promote the development of the whole person.
- e) The curriculum is designed to meet the needs of all students, encouraging and challenging them to develop their natural talents, to realise their potential and to strive for individual excellence.
- f) A range of extra-curricular activities is provided to enhance the skills, creativity and enjoyment of all members.
- g) The school provides an ordered and safe environment where discipline, responsibility and accountability are achieved.
- h) The school models the Gospel values of compassion, justice, love, tolerance, forgiveness and reconciliation by the manner in which conflict is resolved.
- i) Through its practices and teachings, the school demonstrates and promotes respect for the environment.



Creating Community

Our schools are faith communities of welcome and hospitality where Gospel values are lived and where there is special care for those most in need.

- a) A **CEIST** school is a faith-community that is characterised by the quality of its personal relationships.
- b) Pastoral Care is central to the life of the school community, creating an environment where all feel safe and valued and where students are empowered to participate in the life of the school.
- c) Relationships within the school promote self-respect and self-discipline.
- d) The code of conduct emphasises the positive aspects of good behaviour.
- e) The school acknowledges the primary role of parents or guardians in the growth and development of the young person and provides opportunity for their participation in the life of the school.
- f) The school builds up a supporting community around itself with parents, past pupils and neighbours.
- g) In the allocation of resources, priority is given to services for students who have special needs.
- h) The school conducts all aspects of school life in a manner that is sensitive to the needs of each person and to the common good.
- i) Each member of the school is involved in service to others, in particular to those with special needs at local and global levels.
- j) In light of the teaching of Jesus Christ, leadership is understood as service.
- k) The dedicated work of staff members serves students and families.



Being Just and Responsible

We seek to act justly and responsibly in all our relationships.

- a) A **CEIST** school seeks to act justly, promoting the well being of all its members.
- b) The school stands in solidarity with those who are powerless and marginalized.
- c) The school is sensitive to the economic situation of each of its families.
- d) The resources of the school are managed wisely and fairly, with particular attention to those in need.
- e) The school co-operates with agencies in the development of initiatives that challenge all aspects of educational disadvantage.
- f) In the interests of safety and fair play for all the school encourages support networks in and beyond the school community.
- g) The school encourages its members to take an active role in supporting local and global charities.
- h) Through the curriculum and the various activities of the school, the staff and students are encouraged to reflect critically on issues of social justice at local and global levels.
- i) The school promotes and facilitates faith in action programmes, providing opportunities for each member to be active in identifying and alleviating forms of injustice in and beyond the school community.
- j) The school empowers and calls its members to responsible citizenship, to respect for the environment and to good stewardship of the earth.



Application of the Charter

This Charter is based on an understanding of Catholic education and schooling. It is set before the whole **CEIST** community to enrich its life and to foster development at all levels. It is both an inspiration and a challenge. It provides a means to deepen our understanding of the Catholic tradition in education and its application in our time. The identity and core values of **CEIST** should be the norm by which members, directors, boards of management, staff, students and parents measure their mission, performance and priorities. While every school is unique, the Charter forms a common bond between all **CEIST** schools. The mission statement of each school is inspired by the Charter and the tradition of the founding congregations.



Where we come from

Catholic education has a long and distinguished history in Ireland. It survived from one generation to the next since the beginning of Christianity on this island. The early monastic schools gave way to the schools of the great European Orders in the twelfth century. The Bardic Schools of the twelfth to the sixteenth centuries running alongside the new monastic schools nurtured the love of learning and, as their name suggests, the poetry that was deep in the psyche of the native population. These schools have left us with religious and devotional poetry of great expertise and beauty. With the fading out of the Bardic tradition the Classical Schools took up the task of providing an education worthy of their predecessors.

The turbulent political situation in Ireland in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries culminated in the enactment of the Penal Laws passed between 1695 and 1728. The enforcement of the Penal Laws contributed greatly to reducing the people to poverty and to a lack of learning. To be a teacher or a student in a Catholic setting was punishable by imprisonment, expulsion or even execution.



Recent Centuries

Throughout these harrowing times the established Religious Orders stayed with the people. They founded schools or kept existing schools going secretly. Huge numbers of hedge schools were established. Some Catholics who had managed to retain their wealth sent their children abroad to be educated. But for most children education was out of reach and for poverty-stricken parents education had to take second place in the battle for survival. It was into this political and religious scene that two Irish Congregations, the Presentation and the Mercy Sisters, were born.



Nano Nagle opened her first school in Cork in 1754. In setting up schools in defiance of the established colonial order, Nano Nagle sided with those who were poor. She challenged the institutional injustice that perpetuated marginalisation and poverty. In keeping with that ideal, Presentation schools promote a faith community inspired by Gospel values and a holistic response to the spiritual, moral, social, intellectual and physical needs of each student.

Catherine McAuley opened her first school in Dublin in 1827. In similar conditions the two laywomen responded to the crushing poverty of their native cities. They shared the conviction that education would empower the poor to rise from their destitution. Like Nano Nagle before her, Catherine McAuley began her work with the poorest people in Dublin and her first schools were primary schools for the improvement of literacy and the teaching of the Catholic faith to those who had no other opportunity to learn. She initiated fee-paying schools for those who could afford education along with schools for those who could not pay. Inspired by the vision of Catherine McAuley, Mercy education is committed to the full development and the achievement of the potential of each student, particularly those who are disadvantaged or marginalized, conducted in an atmosphere of care, respect and joy.



The **Presentation Congregation** came into being on 24th December 1775 and the **Mercy Congregation** on 12th December 1831.

The Company of the **Daughters of Charity** founded in France in 1633 by St. Vincent de Paul and St. Louise de Marillac provided free schooling for the poorest girls. These first schools were concerned with literacy, helping girls to come to know and love God and also acquire skills that would make them independent.



At the time of the French Revolution in 1789, Anthony Receveur founded the **Sisters of the Christian Retreat**. Their education programme offered a challenge to the French Revolutionaries' idea of liberty, equality and fraternity that excluded God. Their aim is to awaken an alienated world to God through reflection, prayer and retreat. This objective is embodied in their approach to Catholic education.

Jules Chevalier, founder of the **Missionaries of the Sacred Heart** in 1854, discovered a Christ who is compassionate, faithful, loving and humane. Imbued with a deep sense of mission he set up the Congregation to bring the Good News of God's love to all people. He believed the lives of all could be enriched by a spirituality centred on the heart of Christ. This philosophy is the guiding principle in the various ministries of the Congregation, including schools.



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¹ See the *Education Act*, 1998.

² The footnotes that follow link this Charter to Catholic Church teaching and facilitate an understanding and articulation of the Catholic identity of CEIST schools.

³ See Congregation for Catholic Education, *The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School* (RDECS), no. 84.

⁴ See Congregation for Catholic Education, *The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium* (CSTTM), no. 12 and RDECS no. 53.

⁵ See Congregation for Catholic Education, *The Catholic School* (CS), no. 53 and *Lay Catholics in Schools: Witnesses to Faith* (LCSWF), no. 22.

⁶ See LCSWF no. 19; RDECS no. 45; CSTTM no. 16.

⁷ See CS no. 29.

⁸ See CSTTM no. 20.

⁹ See Congregation for Catholic Education, *Consecrated Persons and Their Mission in Schools* (CPTMS), no. 54 and CS no. 19.

¹⁰ See CSTTM no. 12.

¹¹ See RDECS no. 44.

¹² See CSTTM no. 19; LCSWF no. 16; CPTMS no. 59.

¹³ See RDECS no. 51 and CS no. 49.

¹⁴ See CSTTM no. 15.

¹⁵ See CS no. 57.

¹⁶ See CSTTM no. 13.

¹⁷ See *Code of Canon Law*, no. 806.2 and CS no. 38.

¹⁸ See CPTMS no. 60.

¹⁹ See CPTMS no. 52.



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CEIST Education Office
First Floor; Block A
Maynooth Business Campus,
Maynooth,
Co. Kildare

Phone ++353 (0)1 6510350
www.ceist.ie
info@ceist.ie