

Diocese of Hexham and Newcastle

Standards for School Chaplains

Catholic school chaplains are expected to demonstrate consistently high standards of principled and professional conduct inspired by Christ and His beatitudes¹ and exemplified by the self-cultivation of virtues, those qualities of character fundamental to the Catholic tradition: faith, hope, love, justice, solidarity, temperance, fortitude and practical wisdom. Catholic chaplains are expected to meet these Standards for Chaplains.

Catholic chaplains support the headteacher and Senior Leadership Team in their role as custodians of Diocesan schools and as such embody the abundant hope the Church has placed in education. Catholic chaplains also support the headteacher with their task of human formation in conformity with Christ and Church teaching, and so uphold ecclesial and public trust in school leadership and maintain high standards of ethics and behaviour.

Diocesan Standards for Chaplains working in education are divided into five key areas:

1. The Chaplain as witness
2. The Chaplain as pastor
3. The Chaplain as leader
4. The Chaplain as educator
5. The Chaplain as professional

The Chaplain as witness

The Chaplain should:

- a. be a practising Catholic in full communion with the Church, conducting themselves in a manner compatible with their influential position in church and society by behaving ethically, fulfilling their professional responsibilities and modelling the virtues of a good citizen of the Kingdom of God.
- b. set a good example to all members of the school community in terms of living a Christian life by:
 - i. being a person who prays and makes prayer an important feature of decision making and who intercedes on behalf of the community they serve.
 - ii. speaking of their own faith and relationship with Christ.
 - iii. living a life which exemplifies Gospel values.
 - iv. treating all members of the community with dignity, building relationships rooted in mutual respect and in the belief that all are made in the image and likeness of God²
 - v. showing tolerance of and respect for the rights of others, recognising differences and respecting cultural diversity within contemporary Britain enabling each person to play their full part in building and sustaining the Common Good.
 - vi. uphold fundamental British values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect, and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs understanding that such values are rooted in the Catholic understanding of dialogue³ and the Church's social teaching⁴.
 - vii. demonstrating a commitment to Catholic Moral and Social Teaching.

¹ The Gospel of Matthew 5:3-12

² The Book of Genesis 1:26-27

³ *Dialogue and Proclamation*, (1991) Pontifical Council for Inter-Religious Dialogue, Vatican.

⁴ *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, 2004, Vatican.

- viii. ensure that personal beliefs are not expressed in ways which exploit their position, pupils' vulnerability or might lead pupils to break the law but are always orientated to the service of others in light of the Gospel.

The Chaplain as pastor

The Chaplain should:

- a. be attentive to the needs of all members of the school community.
- b. where possible make arrangements for the regular celebration of Mass and the sacrament of reconciliation within school with the priest(s) of the local parish or deanery.
- c. support other staff in school who share the responsibility of the pastoral care of pupils, including the Head Teacher.
- d. accompany the whole community in their highs and lows, celebrating with them in their joys and consoling them in their sorrows.
- e. be able to relate to a wide range of individuals and establish levels of trust where problems can be shared.
- f. focus on the marginalised and the vulnerable within the school community as their special care.

The Chaplain as leader

The Chaplain should:

- a. have a good understanding of the liturgical life of the Church and be able to lead pupils and staff into a fuller appreciation of its richness and beauty.
- b. know how to prepare a space for prayer.
- c. have the skills of a well-trained sacristan and know how to both prepare a space for the celebration of Mass.
- d. care for any sacred space in school, especially where the Blessed Sacrament is reserved.
- e. be skilled in engaging children and young people in prayer, worship and the sacramental life of the Church, particularly the Eucharist and the sacrament of reconciliation, where appropriate.
- f. support class and whole school-based worship through the provision and creation of appropriate worship resources.
- g. help pupils and staff to develop confidence in leading prayer and worship independently.
- h. provide opportunities for staff and pupils to deepen their spiritual life, for example, through the organizing of retreats and days of reflection.

The Chaplain as educator

The Chaplain should:

- a. have a good knowledge and understanding of the Catholic faith to:
 - i. support school catechetical programmes (where they exist).
 - ii. support the formal and informal learning that takes place across school life.
- b. ensure that structured time with pupils is well-planned, delivered and evaluated.
- c. support the professional development of staff in terms of the Catholic life of the school.

The Chaplain as professional

The Chaplain should:

- a. form good working relationships with the nearby priest(s) and parishes and facilitate partnership working between parish/deanery/Diocese and school.

- b. serve in the best interests of the school's pupils.
- c. maintain good working relationships with other members of staff, governors/directors and school leaders.
- d. observe professional standards in terms of appearance, punctuality and full participation in the working life of the school; and at all times observing proper boundaries appropriate to the chaplain's professional position.
- e. have regular performance appraisal.
- f. ensure the protection and safety of pupils and staff through effective approaches to safeguarding, as part of the duty of care.
- g. contribute to self-evaluation processes in readiness for inspection.
- h. take responsibility for their own continued professional development in order to develop their own spirituality and to further the Church's mission in education.
- i. uphold and demonstrate the Seven Principles of Public Life at all times.
 - selflessness
 - integrity
 - objectivity
 - accountability
 - openness
 - honesty
 - leadership