



# Go Out and Bear Fruit

**DIOCESAN SCHOOLS'DAY**  
**Monday 10<sup>th</sup> October 2005**  
**The Guildhall, Winchester**

**Feedback from discussion groups on the  
challenges and opportunities for schools  
presented by the Pastoral Plan.**

*(Comments are presented as written on the  
feedback sheets)*

## **DIOCESAN PASTORAL PLAN: ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION BY SCHOOLS**

### **(A) In 2005-2006 a diocesan programme of catechesis on the centrality of Sunday Eucharist will be developed and implemented.**

What challenges and opportunities does this present our schools?

1. How effectively are we teaching about the Eucharist in our schools?
2. What experience of the Eucharist do students receive?
3. What challenges face us in providing an enriching experience of the Eucharist in our schools?
4. Are our schools Eucharistic communities?
5. Do you have any examples of particularly good practice to share?

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- Importance of theological preparation of staff and prayer groups to encourage spirituality of staff, to be filtered through to children and parents. Diocese to assist.
  - Schools to hold meaningful masses at the children's level.
  - Priest needs to relate to the age group.
  - Preparation of the Mass must be thorough in advance, eg acting out of Gospel/readings, looking at vestments etc.
  - The 12 – 18 year old age group in parishes are not catered for (younger ones have family services etc). They need to have ownership – be asked to read / be involved – strong structure for them.
  - There needs to be an intellectual challenge at all stages of growth – many never develop their own understanding beyond a childish appreciation.
  - As a Catholic school with many non-Catholic pupils, cannot afford to alienate the other faiths – therefore perhaps some aspects of Catholicism are not pushed.
  - Eucharist communities – all involved – not the number of Catholics involved that makes it a Catholic school – ethos.
  - There are issues with non-Catholic teachers who cannot receive Communion but would like to.
  - What exactly does a Eucharistic community mean in the school context?
  - The challenges are greater in the parishes than they are in the schools.
  - A key issue is the training / support for priests on successful liturgies / Eucharist for young people / children – sharing of good practice.
  - Being a Eucharistic community is about more than just celebrating Mass.

- If our schools are important then larger pastoral areas to have more than one priest 'free' for school work to work alongside lay chaplaincy teams.
- Taught through the 'Here I Am' programme, so comes up in teaching once a term. So effective teaching of 'Here I Am' is the key.
- Use of PPA time, enables collaborative planning and preparation of lessons including 'Here I Am', ie teachers can do this together.
- Need to try and recruit staff who are active churchgoers (Catholic – 1<sup>st</sup> choice, other 2<sup>nd</sup> choice) who understand the importance of the sense of Sunday Eucharist gatherings.
- Challenges to this = number of objectives that must be achieved in schools means that this Pastoral Plan, although a priority, is only one of many other important priorities. NB. Adds lots of extra work for parish priest.
- Even though we may not feel all children have felt / experienced the full benefit of the teachings of the Catholic school at the time, when they have left and gone / grown up / adults, they will hopefully remember / learn from their experiences.
- Could do / opportunities:-
  - Half-day retreat for specific groups.
  - Parish priest to be involved in certain specific learning objectives.
  - Individual class Masses?
- Good examples – lots of children involved in the designated Eucharist church – school Masses,
  - Local parishioners attend school Masses.
  - Future links → senior members of parish will go into schools and discuss their life experiences.
- 'Here I Am' programme for year 3 should be more directly linked to the Holy Communion programme AND this could then be 'sent' home as homework / extras for learning / preparation at home, ie involve potentially whole families.
- Build good relationships between parish and schools / community by flexible approaches and involvement (schools in parish) and (parish in schools).
- Pursue the importance of the Eucharist and central community by ensuring younger children have teenage / youth role models.

**(B) Diocesan Vocation Team will work to foster a sense of vocation in the Diocese through which specific vocations to the priesthood will be discerned and supported.**

What challenges and opportunities does this present our schools?

1. How do we foster a sense of vocation amongst our pupils and students?
2. How effectively do we teach about the rôle of the priest in the life of the Church?
3. Should we be actively encouraging vocations to the priesthood in our schools?
4. How can we present the vocation to the priesthood as something worthy of giving serious consideration?
5. Do you have any examples of particularly good practice to share?

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- Careers education → vocations education.
  - Teacher recruitment → supporting / encouraging / sponsoring young Catholics.
  - Priesthood could be offered as part of a team of ‘vocation’ presenters visiting schools – could include eg gap years, other caring professions – needs to become part of school’s work also.
  - Strengthen and develop relationships between schools and National Vocations Team.
  - Priests’ contact with children is limited to school, perhaps few opportunities to develop relationships.
  - Mission and systems in place.
  - Integral to improving role of priests in society is the development of the quality of witness.
  - Age and experience and witness all contribute to improving role of priests and vocation.
  - Formation ongoing vital within school.
  - Good role models – priest as well as teachers.
  - Seeing priest and religion as witness not just as clergy. Everyday life experience.
  - Perhaps secondary resources such as books, stories, posters, music, people.
  - Experience of prayer - not just forma.
  - Linking to experiences such as citizenship – invite clergy in to talk about their vocation as well as the solicitors, doctors, builders etc.
  - Missions – talking about their lives.
  - Image of priests in the press and secular society needs improvement – schools and parishes can help.

**(C) Enable the continuing growth of... school chaplaincy teams.**

What challenges and opportunities does this present our schools?

1. What is the rôle of a chaplain?
  2. How much do we currently rely on priests to provide chaplaincy for our schools?
  3. How will we continue to provide this service if a priest is not available to us?
  4. How much of a priority should school chaplaincy be for the Diocese?
  5. Do you have any examples of particularly good practice to share?
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- All primary schools use our parish priests for chaplaincy.
- Role of chaplain depends on the parish priest and their style.
- One school and parish priest regularly pops into school on a Friday lunchtime to chat to children on playground / pops into staff room.
- Discussed the role of laity – use of deacon in serving the school.
- Different for secondary schools.
- Discussed importance of chaplain in making links to parents – encouraging them back into the church.
- Opportunity to support staff.
- Issue of ‘larger pastoral areas’ priests may take role depending on strength but also may be down to lay people.
- Good involvement of parents in liturgies.
- Need to educate people that the ‘church’ is more than priests.
- Schools arranging visits to parish churches.
- Agreed approach with deanery / diocese with conditions for entry into first Holy Communion programme – differences evident so children’s entry into secondary school disputed.
- Role of chaplaincy team – parish priest, deacon, head. RE co-ordinator, parish co-ordinator:
  - Supporting and developing Catholicity of the whole school.
  - Identifying challenges and barriers to faith journey.
  - Role of staff from other faiths who bring an added dimension to chaplaincy team.
- Rely on priest to celebrate Mass, linked to cycle of year. Decreasing number of Masses celebrated in most schools. Member of governing body?
- Non-Eucharistic services:
  - Involvement of other members of team eg deacon, parish co-ordinator, RE co-ordinator.

- Involvement of parish council in developing this group. Have members of school on parish council.
- Top priority but in a less traditional form. Extended chaplaincy team, working between school and parish. Future of the diocese.
- Small initiatives which link school and church, eg
  - training of altar servers brings children into church.
  - Young Eucharistic ministers.
  - Parish co-ordinator.
  - Shared newsletters.
  - School Masses opened up to parish.
  - School Mass in parish on a regular basis – Sunday.
- Define meaning of chaplaincy. This can get caught up in liturgy rather than the whole support system.
- Consider whether this is ‘outside coming in’ or part of the team.
- Chaplaincy explored as part of governing body but role within school needs further exploration.
- Role needs defining, appreciate that primary / secondary needs will differ.
- Time / availability also an issue.
- Use what is available depending on nature of need. No longer seen as ‘priest’s role’.
- Liturgy of word now encouraged in schools. Group concerned about liturgy of word with ‘tag on Eucharist’.
- Mass and attendance of parish Holy Day. Not a problem. Many schools already link timings. Examples given from Isle of Wight delegates where parish church is an unreasonable working distance.
- Importance of curriculum and what is provided. Role of parish support groups. Will be vital in supporting schools.
- How will these groups be recruited? Supported? Paid for? (– discussed).
- Promote role of prayer and liturgy, leading retreat days supporting non-Catholics, working with a team (inc priests, parents, teachers).
- Primary schools more reliant on priests for chaplaincy.
- Eucharistic services (opportunity to strengthen links with parish).
- Useful to have diocesan advice on expected role of chaplains and ways to support primaries –should be a priority in developing understanding and training of chaplaincy teams in preparation for a time when we cannot rely on priests! (due to shortage!)

### Role of chaplain

- 'Wasting time in school.' To be free for school community. Resources to support network for practice faith in school. Within the school. On own shoulders = faith.
- Funding poor so got to share. Team leader. Staff, students and local parish priest. Anglican priests have children at school – include them? Invite them – could do. Lead staff prayer. Ecumenical services.  
Make Poverty History good example of get resources and get into curriculum.  
Digestion issues / happenings / themes. Year plan. Pressure on the team assembly.  
Forward planning. Students involvement – planning of Masses. Support. Make part of what happening in the Church.  
Similar to RE manager in primary school. Resource of KS2 coming into secondary schools. Roger Parkes Foster. Share good practice. Retreat programme. 'Candletime'.  
Post it notice boards. Prayer boards. Voice for spiritual rhythm of the Church.

### Reliance on priests

- Only see priests when invited in for Mass. Depend on collaboration with priests. No priest: no Eucharist: no Reconciliation – bit stuck really! Parish / school / home partnership. Sunday celebrations invite schools. Goes well. Good experience. Schools initiative. Empower.

### In absence of priest

- Non-Eucharistic liturgy opportunity for input – more from other departments. Engage. Scams! Not same framework. Key to form people / chaplains in PRESIDING at liturgies.
- Remind parents why go on Sunday. Form parents. Get them into their parish to keep it welcome.
- Quality celebration. Enabling confidence. Cannot leave it to chance. Support . . .
- Prayer groups. Older get, fear as to where it was going. Staff liturgies at end of week in staff room early morning. Enthusiastic . . . Antagonism? No . . . 10 minutes before briefing.  
Chaplaincy booklet. Written for someone not a Catholic – easy. Care not to go into jargon. Experience. Prayer. Scary for non-Catholics.  
Everyone has own way of reflection. People appreciate moment to think. Meditation for a treat! People like silence! – love it.

### Priority of school chaplaincy

- Priority? Very – because of no priests.  
Links of feeder primary schools. E..... cluster very important. Come together as a whole. Shared Mass eg 3 yr 6's and secondary school yr 7 progression. Concern Yr 7 not treated as babies. Regress.  
Daunting. To do at own level . . .  
Masses: Go to the Church.

Voluntary Mass eg Mass for Dead. Enabling pupils to express faith / doubt.

**(D) There will be a review of current practice, and development of diocesan guidelines for sacramental preparation and celebration, by July 2007.**

What challenges and opportunities does this present our schools?

1. What contribution do schools make to sacramental preparation?
2. Are there changes to the way in which we prepare children and young people for the sacraments that you would like to see considered?
3. Could/should the schools be doing more?
4. Do you have any examples of particularly good practice to share?

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- Currently very little contribution is made apart from through the worship in school and the curriculum.
  - Improved links between parish and school to communicate on the programmes.
  - Invitations to parents to attend school for assemblies, liturgies, celebrations of sacraments etc to highlight preparation of/for sacraments.
  - Schools could be proactive in reaching out to catechists.
  - Classes visiting parish church for Mass, especially those preparing for sacraments.
  - Many children involved in sacramental preparation do not attend Catholic schools and too much moved back to schools could be exclusive.
  - Sacramental preparation has shifted to parishes, other than in boarding schools.
  - Experiences differ – where deanery co-ordinates confirmation and there is one secondary school, where deanery involves school through Deanery Pastoral Council (Kennet Valley); primary schools have different experiences from secondary schools.
  - For many, the school is their only contact with the Church. There are parishes with no priest so the children have no regular contact with a priest in school – and they do not attend Sunday Mass either, so this is even more vital. The child's / parents' relationship with the Church ends when they leave school.
  - School liturgies are prepared with students and involve them (readers, music etc). Parish liturgies do not always reflect this – so children feel excluded. This tension is a reflection of children not being the only group present in a parish Mass. This has to meet all kinds of needs. Schools are not heavily involved as institutions with sacramental preparation.

Suggestions to improve this situation

- Parish priest informs head teacher of local RC school of any pupils taking part in sacramental preparations so the school can support those involved. (This raises the question of walking alongside pupils of other faiths – how do we recognise significant moments in their lives?)

- Schools could provide some help in providing tools for catechists eg tips on behaviour management.
- In a general sense, schools provide support for sacramental preparation by creating a sense of Catholic community.

**(E) Evangelisation is fundamental to our identity as Christians.**

What challenges and opportunities does this present our schools?

1. What form does evangelisation take in schools at present?
2. How informed are our schools about methods of evangelisation?
3. Can schools do this alone?
4. What support will schools need?
5. Do you have any examples of particularly good practice to share?

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- We need to separate Catholic schools' roles to evangelise and catechise. Concern about the semantics of the words.
  - Evangelisation is reflected in
    - a) the mission statement of the schools
    - b) the values of teachers within the school, how we treat the members of community, staff and students.
  - Varying degrees of knowledge of evangelisation this has been helped by the questions in self-review documentation that allows us to identify the multiplicity of ways in which we evangelise.
  - Schools may feel they often have to do this alone.
  - Schools will need support from the parishes to provide people who are prepared to witness for their faith. This witness of great importance in allowing the pupils to feel that they are not just part of the school community but are also an important and valued part of the parish community.
  - To put the 'Go out and bear fruit' sections onto the next 7 diocesan edu-forum meetings agendas
  - Asking questions may put some parents off.
  - It has to be seen to be across the board – witnessing.
  - Questions are not meant to make us comfortable.
  - Questioning makes us think and will often stay in people's minds – ask questions in newsletters, at assembly, in class groups, staff meetings.
  - What we are promoting with evangelisation?  
Forums – gospel values
    - spirituality
    - importance of looking outwards – why are we Fair Trade schools?
  - Children are basically generous – they are active Christians.
    - have strong sense of justice.

- Support is needed from – parents
  - staff
  - to work collaboratively together to share resources.
- Is it that we do not ask parents for their support?
- Schools know their own situation and what is best for them – but may open up to more experiences with greater involvement.

#### Good practice

- Pupils seeing staff witness.
- Prayer and reflection put into registers.
- First communion programmes in schools with parishes
- Prayer cloths made by pupils.
- Sensory gardens for prayer.
- Parish fundraising for retreats for schools.
- Liturgy open to all parents.
- A bulletin board of good ideas.
- A student liturgy planning group.
- Secondary schools sharing with primaries in liturgies / work experience etc.
- Staff retreats with partners to renew and have time for reflection.

**(F) The Diocese will continue to move towards Fair Trade status.**

What challenges and opportunities does this present our schools?

1. Are you becoming a Fair Trade school?
  2. Is there anything stopping you from becoming a Fair Trade school?
  3. Do you have any examples of particularly good practice to share?
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- Concept taught within school not always explicit.
- Cost is a factor (and taste).
- No school resources from Fair Trade
- Need to explore what is manageable ie what we do as opposed to what we 'do' eg recycle, waste of food, waste of water. Fair Trade willing to come into school to show produce sold. Will also come to parish fayres.
- Fair Trade should be about quality of relationship to more people away from 'product'. It is the reason behind that is important. Group felt this is the message being given in our schools - RE, relationships etc.
- We are not too sure what the title of this issue means – who confers status etc?
- Quality of the tea bags!
- School had investigated Fair Trade tea and coffee – range of success within staffroom.
- School council had suggested tuck shop for treat, once a fortnight etc. contacted Fair Trade for bars/snacks including healthy things.
- No-one aware of anything wider than tea/coffee/chocolate and basketware within Fair Trade – need more information.
- School uniforms will be a hornet's nest → cheap → sweatshops?
- Maybe link is to educating our children / staff so that choices can be made. CAFOD / Christian Aid have very good materials to support development and education.
- Hilary Foley found out about what it is to be a Fair Trade parish – interesting.
- Use of harvest to emphasise our relationship with farmers of the world.
- Use local produce.

**(G) By May 2006 the Department for Schools will devise a strategy to encourage the involvement of pupils and students in parishes.**

What challenges and opportunities does this present our schools?

1. What does involvement with the parish mean? Is it just about getting them to Mass on Sunday?
2. What links do schools have with their local parish?
3. How could the parish communities be more involved with our schools?
4. Do you have any examples of particularly good practice to share?

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- Being needed in a meaningful way
  - Lay chaplaincy to liaise with school / parish.
  - Priests coming to school for liturgy.
  - Governors
  - Catholic education every day!
  - Termly visits by school to each parish.
  - Audit skills, time, talent, treasure what members of parish have and are willing to share in school. Parishioners come into school to get to know children.
  - Chaplaincy team to work on liturgy in school and occasionally take out to parishes.
  - Linking with sacramental programmes.
  - Depends if you are a parish school and philosophy of what school / parish contribute to each other.
  - Consider:-
    - How parish views school.
    - People feel they are at services in own right rather than what they get from each other. Welcoming and perception of older / younger groups of each other needs work.
    - Continued need to work at creative involvement, however infrequently people attend. The 'guilt attachment' needs addressing.
    - Explore links in Eucharistic programme – school / parish share preparation.
    - Using Church as a teaching resource for creation of awe and wonder, to encourage return.
    - Continue to encourage / develop school / parish (Sunday) Mass occasions.
  - Links can often be stronger if Church and school are physically close.
  - This fortunate geography can lead to, for example, good parental attendance at weekly school Mass, because parents can 'do Mass' and then collect their child??

- Does it mean that the parents ‘owning’ (being part of) the Church in the same way that they ‘own’ the school?
- We can support our priests in their expanded role.
- We are interested in whether this will be a ‘blueprint’ for how schools and parishes can come closer.
- Good to have movement of staff in their own school’s parish where possible.
- Will schools become a focal point – a natural focus – when LPAs are set up? The school will be a fixed, constant point. Rather than the priest flying around, could school be a place where the community comes to him to some extent?
- Communication across LPA? Pooled newsletters, including maybe the school’s newsletter?
- School is where we interface with many unchurched or marginally churched members of our community.
- This question of how to ‘outreach and attract’ is a massive one. How effective can schools be?
- With declining numbers of priests, who does the outreach?
- The changing nature of Sunday as a day of rest and worship needs to be understood.
- Teachers have more time and opportunity to witness than to evangelise.
- Would greater understanding of pressure on young people help us to engage and sustain them as active churchgoers? Young people need to do and not just to sit. Young people are searching – do we give them somewhere to go, do, search and grow? Eg Kintbury and in parishes?
- Massive opportunity for the people of the parish to set up these opportunities for our young people.
- Diocese needs to recognise that schools are under massive pressure from other areas – how do we cope with need to evangelise as well?
- A core question and even test of our success is ... “Why do so few of our children go to Mass?” or even, “How come so few First Communicants make it to Confirmation?”
- How do parishes develop this nurturing, internally supportive ethos which can then lead to evangelisation?
- Need to establish our own internal (LPA) networks before we can move outwards.