

# An introduction to Catholic education





## Welcome

The Catholic Education Service (CES) is the Catholic Bishops' national agency for education. It represents Bishops' national education policy in relation to the 2300 Catholic schools, colleges and university colleges which the Church is responsible for across England and Wales.

The CES negotiates with the Westminster and Welsh Governments and other national bodies in order to safeguard and promote Catholic education. It also offers a Catholic contribution to the English and Welsh educational landscapes, seeking to ensure that the principles of Catholic Social Teaching are reflected in all aspects of national education policy.



*The Right Reverend Malcolm McMahon OP  
CES Chairman*

The CES works closely with Catholic education bodies in Scotland and Ireland, and with the European Committee for Catholic Education, to promote Catholic education at an international level. Within England and Wales, the CES liaises with the Church of England's National Society and other faith groups, to ensure that, where appropriate, the different faith communities speak with one voice on educational issues of mutual concern.

This booklet is designed to tell you a little bit more about us and our schools. We hope you find it useful.

## Our Policy Team

---

Fr Marcus Stock  
Interim Director

Greg Pope  
Deputy Director  
gpope@cesew.org.uk

Fr Tim Gardner OP  
Religious Education Adviser  
tgardner@cesew.org.uk

Christine Fischer  
Legal Adviser  
cfischer@cesew.org.uk

Maeve McCormack  
Policy and Briefing Manager  
mmccormack@cesew.org.uk

## A brief history of Catholic education

The Catholic Church was arguably the first provider of schools and universities in England. Following the Reformation in the 16th century,



the Church's role as a provider of public education went largely underground until the 1800s. In 1847 the Catholic Poor School Committee was established, which focused on the promotion of Catholic primary education. This was followed by the

re-establishment of the Catholic hierarchy in England and Wales in 1850.

Because the Church has always viewed education as vital to the formation and development of the whole person, it put the setting up of Catholic schools for the Catholic community ahead of building Churches, often using its schools in those early days as the place for worship for the parish. In 1905 the Catholic Education Council was established as the overarching organisation to promote Catholic Education in England and Wales on behalf of the Catholic Bishops (this later became the Catholic Education Service).

Catholic schools continued to be established throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, which, at a time when state involvement in education was still very limited, meant that Catholic parents from



## A brief history of Catholic education

underprivileged backgrounds were nevertheless able to send their children to school. Service to those who are amongst the most disadvantaged in our society has also always been central to the mission of Catholic education. Many Catholic schools were established in the 19th Century to meet the needs of poor Catholic immigrants from Ireland and that mission remains strong today, with Catholic schools continuing to

receive the disadvantaged from the new immigrant populations from across the world. Catholic dioceses today remain conscious of their responsibility to meet the needs of established local Catholic families, Catholic traveller



children and Catholic immigrants from other parts of the world, including Eastern Europe and parts of Africa, Latin America and South East Asia. Catholic schools today also provide 30% of their places to children and young people who are not Catholic but whose parents want them to have a Catholic education.

In 1944 the educational landscape across England and Wales changed forever with the passing of the Education Act 1944 (also known as the 'Butler Act'). This act promised 'secondary education for all' and increased the school leaving age to 15, meaning that all children from the post-war generation received a minimum of 10 years of education.

Under the Butler Act, Catholic schools became 'voluntary aided' schools. This meant that they became part of the state system of education, whilst retaining their distinctively Catholic ethos through various legal protections which continue to apply to Catholic schools to this day. The agreement between Church and State meant that the

## A brief history of Catholic education



funding of Catholic schools was shared by the Catholic foundations of the schools (in most cases the Dioceses or religious orders) and by the government. The first Catholic sponsored academies opened in 2005 and in 2011 some voluntary aided Catholic schools began to convert to academies.

The Church is also involved in higher education in England through its three university colleges (St Mary's in Twickenham, Newman College in Birmingham and Leeds Trinity) and one joint Anglican-Catholic university (Liverpool Hope). This continues the long-established involvement of the

Church in higher education in England, which dates back to at least the thirteenth century. Prior to the Reformation, the Church played a major role in the development of Oxford and Cambridge Universities.

Following the restoration of the Catholic hierarchy, the Bishops' intention to establish schools meant that teacher training became a priority. With this in mind, a number of teacher training colleges were established (St Mary's, established in 1850, is one of the oldest). Some of these teacher training colleges have now been subsumed into larger universities (e.g.

Roehampton University), and others have expanded to become university colleges and universities in their own right. Thus, higher education in the Catholic tradition continues to flourish.



## A brief history of Catholic education

Through its involvement in primary, secondary and higher education, the Catholic Church currently educates over 800,000 pupils and students across England and Wales. As such the Church's stake in education is not only deeply embedded in our country's history, but through its continued collaboration with the state, is something that remains at the heart of the Church's

mission, serving the Catholic community and contributing to the common good.

The evidence of its success and its service to wider society may be seen clearly in the roles being played by Catholics in our

nation today. Catholics contribute nationally in all strata of society, integrated and serving across all professions, in civic life, in charitable and voluntary endeavours and in sustaining and nurturing family life.



Historically Catholic education has flourished in England and Wales. It continues to do so today and will continue to act as a beacon and provider of good practice and authentic education.



## About Catholic schools

---

There are 2289 Catholic schools in England and Wales (10% of the national total)

Catholic maintained schools and colleges in England and Wales currently educate approximately 781,400 pupils

In 2009, the proportion of Catholic pupils in Catholic maintained schools was 75% in England

About three-fifths (57%) of teachers in maintained Catholic schools and colleges in England and Wales are themselves Catholic

28% of pupils in Catholic primary schools are from ethnic groups other than the white British category, compared to the national average of 24%, and the proportion is 26% in Catholic secondary schools, compared to the average 21%

In terms of overall effectiveness, Ofsted judged 73% of Catholic secondary schools to be outstanding or good, compared to 60% of schools nationally. For primary schools, 74% of Catholic schools were judged outstanding or good compared to 66% nationally

## About Catholic schools

---

In terms of the contextual value added measure, 58% of Catholic secondary schools had above average scores, compared to 39% of schools nationally

On the Ofsted global judgement of learners' achievements, 74% of Catholic schools were good or outstanding compared to 66% of all schools

In two of the Ofsted sub-categories Catholic schools were almost twice as likely to be outstanding as all schools: the development of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development (56% outstanding compared to 30% of all schools) and their behaviour (44% outstanding compared to 24% of all schools)

According to Ofsted, in 51% of Catholic schools learners made an outstanding contribution to the community compared to 38% of all schools

At GCSE level, the proportion of students obtaining 5 or more GCSEs at A\*-C (including English and Maths) was consistently at least 6% higher in Catholic schools than in schools nationally



## **Get in touch:**

**Email: [general@cesew.org.uk](mailto:general@cesew.org.uk)**

**Telephone: 020 7901 1900**

**Website: [www.cesew.org.uk](http://www.cesew.org.uk)**

**Twitter: [@CESEWupdates](https://twitter.com/CESEWupdates)**