A Vision for Excellence

The vision, values and principles of Plymouth CAST

Approved by the Board on 2 November 2018

Foreword by Bishop Mark O'Toole

I am delighted to commend this paper, A Vision for Excellence, to all of you. It sets out the vision, values and principles which will guide Plymouth CAST over these next years. I thank all those who took part in the consultation and all those who have worked so hard to put forward such an inspiring and thorough vision for our schools. I know it will contribute towards the establishment of the outstanding educational outcomes that we want for all our children and young people.

Every Catholic school is a place to encounter the living God who, in Jesus Christ, reveals his transforming love and truth. Our vision, then, is founded on the Gospel of Jesus Christ and the teaching of the Catholic Church. In every school we seek to lay the foundations for every child's spiritual development and to put Christ and his teachings at the centre of their education.

The Church believes that a Catholic school must be at least as academically distinguished as other schools in the area [Code of Canon Law, 806.2]. We aim to achieve this by ensuring that excellence, for the sake of the Gospel, is at the heart of everything we do. We all know, that just as important as an outstanding education is the contribution that Catholic schools make to the common good. Although our schools are provided primarily to support the right of Catholic parents to choose a Catholic education for their children, all are welcome in our schools should they desire to benefit from an education inspired by the Gospel.

We seek to improve the life chances of every child by raising their aspirations. This is not for personal gain, but so that through education they may come to serve their brothers and sisters in our world, especially the vulnerable. Furthermore, following the teaching of Pope Francis in his encyclical *Laudato Si*, we wish to inspire our young people to care for the earth, our common home. We want our young people to leave our schools inspired to be 'agents of change', to work towards building the kingdom of peace, love and justice.

This paper, together with the accompanying codes of conduct for staff and governors, sets out the ways in which we expect people in, or involved with our schools, to act and behave. Taken together with the teaching of the Catholic Church, they reflect the principles that should be applied when, in the future, there are difficult decisions to be made.

I know all our staff and governors will make a commitment to support and promote the vision, values and principles outlined in this paper and the relevant codes of conduct. Your dedication and commitment is much appreciated. Nothing should ever compromise our commitment to the highest standards of behaviour and professional practice in the service of the mission of the Church in education, so that each child can reach their fullest potential.

With my thanks to all our teaching and support staff and to the members of our local governing boards, for your commitment to the flourishing of our young people.

Yours devotedly

Rt Rev Mark O'Toole
Bishop of Plymouth

Our Vision Statement

The Church insists on the highest standards of academic achievement in its schools, so that our young people leave us as 'agents of change' – educated and caring people who have the qualifications, knowledge and skills they need to flourish as human beings and make the world a better place.

Inspired by our Teacher, Jesus Christ, and his good news to the poor, we have a commitment especially to those who are disadvantaged. We are determined that a child's start in life need not determine their future. We are committed to the well-being of the earth, our common home, inspired by the example of Pope Francis: to live wisely, think deeply and love generously.

In all our schools we will develop a culture of high expectation and aspiration, based on our fundamental belief in the dignity of all human beings. We want all our pupils to flourish in safe, happy and enriching environments, taught and supported by adults who are skilled, motivated and committed to our shared vision and values.

We will work together as one Trust, one family of schools, a community inspired by a vision for excellence. We commit ourselves to deepen our mission and raise standards in order to provide an excellent Catholic education for every child in our care.

Our Four 'drivers'

To that end, we have identified four 'drivers', four areas we will focus on relentlessly in order to build our collaborative capacity and achieve our aim of providing an outstanding Catholic education for every one of our pupils. Our drivers are:

1. Learning

In our Trust community, learning will be at the heart of what we do, especially the learning which takes places in our classrooms every school day. We will focus on:

- Personalised learning to ensure that every child fulfils their potential
- Effective, evidence-based learning, leading to excellent outcomes
- Our more vulnerable pupils, especially those in receipt of Pupil Premium and pupils with Special Educational Needs and Disability
- Character formation and self-regulation - building our pupils' understanding of how they learn
- A curriculum inspired by Gospel values and care of our common home
- Building learning communities of adults to improve subject knowledge and the impact of classroom practice
- Developing a common language of learning, a CAST method and practice of teaching and learning

2. Leadership

Excellent leadership is the key to deliver the quality of education we want for our pupils. We will focus on:

- Strategic thinking at Board and senior level
- The leadership of school improvement at all levels - from implementation to impact to careful monitoring
- The next generation of leaders at all levels, planning for succession
- Our current leaders with *Towards Outstanding* programmes
- Local leaders of education to co-ordinate local provision
- Support and challenge – developing our QA systems and accountability
- Developing the talent and expertise of our staff
- Co-ordinating and developing the talent and commitment of our local governors
- Leadership opportunities for our pupils, especially in chaplaincy

3. Collaboration

In our Trust, collaboration and school to school support is key to improving outcomes and achieving viability. To that end, we will focus on:

- Improving school to school support, drawing on local strengths
- The development and co-ordination of staff expertise, creating teams of local and CAST-wide experts
- The links between our schools and local parish communities
- Building partnerships with the wider educational community to secure improvement and recruitment

4. Systems

Our Trust will be able to achieve its aspiration for excellence when our work is underpinned and supported by excellent systems. To that end we will focus on:

- The further development of a timely and accurate data system in order to monitor improvement
- The development of a CAST IT strategy, led by teaching and learning
- The development of even more effective systems to monitor compliance in our schools, especially in safeguarding and health and safety
- The further development of our finance system, led by school business managers
- An effective communication and information strategy, including a new website
- Producing a Service Level Agreement that outlines what schools receive from CAST Central

Culture

With these drivers at the heart of our improvement journey, we aim to create a culture in Plymouth CAST dedicated to achieving our vision of an excellent Catholic education for every pupil. This culture will be defined by the following characteristics:

- A culture of aspiration and excellence as the norm
- A culture of welcome, especially for non-Catholic colleagues and pupils
- A child-centred culture – what is best for them?
- A culture of high challenge/low threat based on respect and a commitment to continuous improvement
- A culture of vigilance where safeguarding and health and safety are seen as everyone's responsibility
- A 'no excuses' culture – where no cohort, family or pupil is left behind
- A culture of restless self-evaluation – how can we do better?
- A culture of good stewardship which strives for viability and sustainability
- A culture of high standards of behavior
- A culture of support for adults – recognising when there is pressure on staff, with a focus on staff well-being
- A culture of faith – where everyone has 'permission' to pray and grow spiritually
- Above all, a loving culture

When this vision becomes a reality, our pupils will leave us with:

- A sense of their dignity and worth as a person loved by God
- A sense that creation is God-given and good and we have a duty of care towards our common home
- The best academic qualifications they were capable of achieving to allow them to flourish in adult life
- A sense of service to the world, especially to the disadvantaged
- A sense that they are gifted and called to a vocation of service in life
- Happy memories of their time in school, especially of how adults made them feel – a sense of belonging

Our Mission Statement

Our mission statement:

"Our mission is to be a community of outstanding schools in which our pupils flourish in safe, happy and stimulating environments and leave us with the knowledge and skills, personal qualities and aspirations, to make the world a better place, inspired by the Gospel."

Our Values

The values which inspire our work and inform the ethos and decision-making in our schools are the values of the Gospel, based on the Beatitudes in the Gospel of Matthew (Chapter 5: 1-11). These values are presented to the school community at assemblies and liturgies and explored throughout the working week in the classroom. When we come to celebrate achievement in the school, we recognize first and foremost those who have witnessed to Gospel values, as well as recognising excellence in other areas.

The Beatitudes, according to the Catechism, "…depict the countenance of Jesus Christ and portray his charity." In a very moving way, they sum up the essence of the transformed human being God calls us all to be in Jesus. These are the kind of persons and actions that are 'blessed' by God, this is the 'job description' of people living in God's kingdom, as opposed to the world's kingdom of selfishness, inequality, aggression, materialism and violence. They challenge each generation to reflect on what persons and actions they consider to be important or blessed.

"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven"

Gospel value: Humility, seeing life as a gift

"Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted"

Gospel value: Compassion, empathy

"Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth"

Gospel value: Kindness, gentleness

"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied"

Gospel value: Justice, working for a fairer world

"Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy"

Gospel value: Forgiveness, reconciliation

"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God"

Gospel value: Integrity, do what you say

"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called children of God"

Gospel value: Peace, committed to peacemaking, non-violence

"Blessed are those who are those who are persecuted for righteousness sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven"

Gospel value: Courage, standing up for truth

Our schools are invited to adopt this common set of Gospel values and integrate them into the liturgical life of the school. We will also look at ways in which we can incorporate these values in the curriculum itself, so that we offer an education to or children 'in the light of the Gospel'.

Our Principles

The following 10 principles, derived from our vision and values and specific to our context, will determine how we go about managing the change process and making decisions. Embedded in these principles are the Nolan principles of public life (See: Appendix 1 for Nolan Principles).

1. **Dignity of the individual**. This principle promotes a focus on the dignity of the other rather than 'my' dignity, especially the dignity of the child or young person. Adults in our community share the same dignity, of course, but our schools are 'child-centred' – our reason for being is to provide an education for them of the highest quality.
2. **Preferential option for the most vulnerable**. From our Old Testament roots, Christianity has had a particular mission to serve those who are marginal in our world – the lost, the least and the last. In our schools, our most disadvantaged and 'lost' should be a priority in the allocation of time and professional attention.
3. **High standards**. As stated in Canon Law, the Church has high expectations of the academic performance of Catholic schools. This is a question of social justice, equipping our pupils to be 'agents of change' and giving them a chance to flourish in a challenging world. In line with the principle of dignity, high standards extend to all areas of life in school.
4. **Accountability**. Clear expectations are required about who is responsible for what in the Trust and to whom they are accountable. Leadership is one of our four 'drivers' and effective leadership ensures that accountability is clear and effective at all levels in the Trust.
5. **Good stewardship**. Our Trust is funded by the state, sponsored by the Church, and our challenge is to provide an excellent Catholic education for our pupils while delivering value for money for the state and the Church. Good stewardship means that we challenge inefficiency and consider the viability of schools with long-term deficit budgets, falling rolls and poor outcomes. The Catholicity of leadership is also a factor in considerations of stewardship.
6. **Unity**. We are one family of schools, one multi-academy trust. Collaboration is one of our drivers and we are committed to developing a deeper sense of community and identity. We will support our schools when they drop in standards or cannot balance their budget, but the justice of good stewardship means that we cannot support and subsidize a school indefinitely which does not have any prospect of financial or educational viability.
7. **Alignment**. Our principle as a Trust is first of all to align in terms of practice and policies. There are some areas where this is statutory. One employer means one pay policy, one finance system, one HR function and so on. We will allow for local variations where that is desirable.
8. **Objectivity**. All of our staff and our leaders especially must bring objectivity to their judgements and decision-making and never be seen to be siding with a vested interest or individual. In making appointments, awarding contracts or recommending individuals for rewards and benefits, decision-makers should make choices on merit.
9. **Openness**. In a period of change and transformation there may be some difficult conversations and decisions to be made. Throughout the process, it is important that we establish an open and honest culture, with good communication, questions answered as fully as possible and opportunities for everyone to speak and be listened to.
10. **Integrity**. In common with all public bodies, but especially so in those associated with the Church, the highest standards of honesty and integrity must apply. Moral rectitude should be a defining feature of our schools. Any community which values integrity must provide opportunities for stakeholders to 'speak up' if there are any concerns or suspicions of wrongdoing, especially when it comes to the safety and well-being of children.

In line with the Nolan principles, all staff and local governors and especially those in **leadership** roles will be expected to promote and support these principles by example.

Our Codes of Conduct

"Bear with one another charitably, in compete selflessness, gentleness and patience. Do all you can to preserve the unity of the Sprit by the peace that binds you together."

Ephesians 4:1-6

On 26 October, the Board approved a Staff Code of Conduct for all those who work for Plymouth CAST, in our schools or in CAST Central. This Code is founded on the vision, values and principles in this paper. All staff should sign a declaration that they have read and understood the Code and undertake to support and promote the Code.

On 26 October, the Board also approved a Code of Conduct for governors serving on our local governing boards. This Code is based on the CES model code and is founded on the vision, values and principles in this paper. All governors should sign a declaration that they have read and understood the Code and undertake to support and promote the Code.

Appendix I

The Nolan Principles

(Originally published by the Nolan Committee: The Committee on Standards in Public Life was established by the then Prime Minster in October 1994, under the Chairmanship of Lord Nolan, to consider standards of conduct in various areas of public life, and to make recommendations)

- **Selflessness** – Holders of public office should act solely in terms of the public interest. They should not do so to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, or their friends.

- **Integrity** – Holders of public office should not place themselves under the financial or other obligation to outside individuals or organisations that might seek to influence them in the performance of their official duties.

- **Objectivity** – In carrying out public business, including making public appointments, awarding contracts, or recommending individuals for rewards and benefits, holders of public office should make choices on merit.

- **Accountability** – Holders of public office are accountable for their decisions and actions to the public and must submit themselves to whatever scrutiny is appropriate to their office.

- **Openness** – Holders of public office should be as open as possible about all the decisions and actions that they take. They should give reasons for their decisions and restrict information only when the wider public interest clearly demands

- **Honesty** – Holders of public office have a duty to declare any private interests relating to their public duties and to take steps to resolve any conflicts arising in a way that protects the public interest

- **Leadership** – Holders of public office should promote and support these principles by leadership and example