



Association of Patrons and
Trustees of Catholic Schools

Comhar Pátrún agus Iontaobhaithe na Scoileanna Caitliceacha

THREE STATEMENTS INFORMING THE WORK OF THE ASSOCIATION

Is mise an tSlí, an Fhírinne agus an Bheata (Eoin 14:6)

I am the Way, the Truth and the Life (John 14:6)

June 2022

INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

The **Association of Patrons and Trustees of Catholic Schools (APTCS)** is an association, a company limited by guarantee and a registered charity. At present its remit covers Catholic patronage at Catholic post primary level in the Republic of Ireland. The Catholic Educational Partnership (CEP) is the sole member of APTCS as a company.

THREE STATEMENTS ARE PROVIDED IN THIS DOCUMENT:

STATEMENT 1	STATEMENT 2	STATEMENT 3
The Mission of APTCS	The Vision and Values of APTCS and its Associate Patrons and Trustees	High-level Commitments and Principles informing the living of the Ethos of the Catholic School through the dynamic expression of characteristic spirit.

THE PURPOSE OF THESE STATEMENTS IS TO:

- 1/** Provide information in the public forum (including for parents/ guardians, educational partners, the State and the media) regarding APTCS;
- 2/** Direct the work of the APTCS Board and staff;
- 3/** Provide the basis for cooperation between APTCS and related bodies especially the CEP, SSS and CPSMA;
- 4/** Lay the foundation for successive APTCS Strategic Plans;
- 5/** Provide a basis for the partnership with our associate patrons and trustees; and
- 6/** Provide a point of reference for our associated patrons and trustees in articulating their own mission, vision and ethos at systemic and individual school levels.

THE CONTEXT IN WHICH THE STATEMENTS ARE ARTICULATED

The context in which these statements are articulated is informed primarily by the Catholic understanding of the education of the human person and by attention to the present and emerging realities which underpin the provision of schooling in contemporary Ireland.

Thus:

- 1/** APTCS understands Catholic schools as being more than a sector but as a 'communio' – a living faith-based network of educational communities that transcend the given moment. A living Christian faith is one that is in constant dialogue with the variety of human cultures, the ongoing articulation of human identities, the particularities of human societies in a given place and time and the fruits of the human search for meaning, value and truth as evident in religious and non-religious systems of belief.
- 2/** Catholic schools are rooted in the gospel values evident in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, a living tradition within the local and universal Catholic community (which is global and which has found and finds many expressions across time and cultures), and in the rich diversity of Catholic educational traditions. Thus the invitation or call to be followers of the way of Jesus is central to the self-understanding of the Catholic school.
- 3/** Catholic Schools are a direct expression of the Church's work of evangelisation. Full human development is grounded in a living relationship with God, with other people and with creation and our schools invite all to share this understanding of what it means to be human. They also recognise the reality of human failure, of suffering, inequality and exploitation and of the necessity of building the Kingdom of God through the work of justice. Thus the school is seen both as an agent of personal growth and of social transformation and is strongly associated with the beliefs, values and work of the wider Catholic community.
- 4/** Catholic tradition sees parents / guardians and families as the primary educators of their children with the right to choose an education that reflects their beliefs and values. The existence of Catholic schools is a living expression of the educational choices made by parents / guardians.
- 5/** Catholic tradition sees every human person as being uniquely created in the image and likeness of God, as having an eternal destiny and as being invited to be free, relational and rational. It is in the person of Jesus that we find the authentic image of what it means to be human and of the presence of God in human experience. This leads to the Catholic school being founded on a specific understanding of the nature and purpose of education.
- 6/** Catholic schools are an act of service to the pupils, their parents / guardians and families, wider society and the common good. They seek to provide excellence in all aspects of education.
- 7/** The work of Catholic schools is enriched by the Church's social teachings and emphasis on inter-religious and inter-cultural dialogue.

- 8/** The majority of Catholic Schools in Ireland at both primary and post-primary levels are voluntary schools in receipt of substantial state funding. The voluntary nature of these schools is particularly evident in the service of patrons, trustees and the members of Boards of Management and the close ties of the school with a local diocese, parish and / or religious congregation.
- 9/** There is a welcome and long-established tradition of diversity with the system of Catholic Schools in Ireland. Catholic patrons and trustees are committed to their individual histories and founding intentions. There is a dynamism and evolution of expression in the articulations of Catholic ethos and characteristic spirit. The Catholic school is part of the pastoral mission of the Church. This ethos is lived in a manner that is authentic to the Catholic faith tradition, the founding intention of the school and the unique concrete experience of each school community.
- 10/** In this way the Catholic School provides parents / guardians and families in Ireland with a rich spectrum in exercising the right to choose a school for their children.
- 11/** The long collective experience of Catholic schools in journeying with young people affirms that in everyone there is a longing for humanity's rightful dignity, for moral integrity, for free expression of being and a sense of transcendence over a world of mere material existence.
- 12/** Catholic Religious Education is part of a life-long process of faith formation in which many actors play a part (the individual themselves, the family, the local parish community and the school). It includes a focus on the personal, the moral, the social and the spiritual dimensions of human life and does so in an integrated and holistic manner. It is an integral part of the life of the school.
- 13/** As well as providing Religious Education the Catholic school expresses its characteristic spirit through the provision of pastoral, liturgical and social outreach activities as appropriate for each student.
- 14/** A progressive, contemporary, democratic society such as Ireland is best enhanced by freedom of parental educational choice and a plurality of patronage provision. This is evident when the state provides funding for education while parents / guardians can choose those schools (faith-based or secular) that reflect their wishes and hopes for their children.

STATEMENT 1

The Mission of APTCS

APTCS is established for ‘the advancement of Catholic religion and the advancement of education in accordance with Catholic Ethos through promoting best operational practice in the exercise of trusteeship and patronage of schools’, (Memorandum of Association 3.1)¹

Thus **the Mission of APTCS** (working with the Catholic Education Partnership, the Secretariat of Secondary Schools and the Catholic Primary Schools Management Association) **is to:**

- 1/** Represent, enable and resource the work of the patrons and trustees of Catholic Schools in Ireland;
- 2/** Provide high-level engagement with educational partners including the State, the Department of Education, School Leadership Bodies, other patronage bodies with whom relevant co-patronage arrangements are in existence, relevant associations through which the voice of Catholic parents / guardians is expressed, and those professional bodies representing teachers;
- 3/** Consolidate the work of associate patrons and trusts while preserving and enhancing the richness of the Catholic educational tradition which they represent; and
- 4/** Contribute to the articulation by our associate patrons and trustees of their mission, values and characteristic spirit of the schools under their stewardship.

APTCS is committed to working with the above high level bodies responsible for Catholic Education in the Republic of Ireland as well with as its associate patrons and trustees (see MoA 3.17) in order to:

Enhance Mission, Vision and Cohesion:

- inspired by foundational documents such as those of the Holy See and the National Directory for Catechesis in Ireland (*Share the Good News*, 2011) and Vision 2008 articulate a core strategic vision of Catholic Education in contemporary Ireland;
- respect distinctive educational intentions and missions: acknowledging that not all Catholic secondary schools are the same – their past, present and future narratives that constitute the rich tapestry of our schools in the Republic of Ireland (see MoA 3.1.1.); and
- provide access to high level expertise and learning from each other in the exercise of our obligations as patrons and trustees (see MoA 3.1.3, 3.1.4, 3.1.5, 3.1.6 and all of 4).

¹ See also APTCS principal objects (extracts in Appendix 1)

Enhance Advocacy and Consistency of Messaging for Catholic Education in Ireland:

- provide an authoritative Patron-Trustee voice for Catholic schools in the public and statutory domains; and
- advocate for Catholic schools with the State and wider society;
- promote and enable provision of faith development in Catholic schools;
- promote and enable provision of faith development needs of the Catholic community in Community and Comprehensive Schools and Designated Community Colleges.
- advocate on behalf the Catholic patrons in Community and Comprehensive Schools and represent Catholic interests in Designated Community Colleges.

Enhance Collaboration and Resource Management:

- Assist Catholic patrons to fulfil the roles assigned to them in the 1998 Education Act;
- Sustain and build capacity throughout the system in a manner which reflects the distinctive roles of parents / guardians and families, parishes and dioceses, educational institutions and their staff, patrons and trustees, and the state;
- Engage with the state to ensure that the work of Trustees is adequately financed;
- As requested, participate in the process by which new Catholic schools are proposed and established in a co-ordinated and strategic manner, and conversely in the processes by which existing schools are merged, divested or closed; and
- Provide and contribute to initial and ongoing professional development for key personnel within the Catholic secondary school system (especially for patrons, trustees and management).

STATEMENT 2

The Vision and Values of APTCS and its Associate Patrons and Trustees

APTCS asserts that the patrons and trustees of a contemporary Catholic School value:

- the continuing relevance of our Catholic educational tradition in witnessing to the on-going and active presence of God in human experience;
- the recognition of the contemporary realities of the ever-changing pluralist Irish society within a democratic European Union and an interconnected global society;
- Pope Francis' call to fraternal humanism, the building of a civilisation of love, the Global Compact for Education and the care of our common home;
- the Gospel invitation to work in a spirit of loving service, compassion, authenticity, dialogue, humility, struggle, forgiveness, justice and solidarity;
- the prioritisation of service to those who are poor, dispossessed, marginalised or dehumanised;
- the effectiveness of an educational dialogue that is reflectively and critically informed by the on-going interconnected conversation between human experience, culture, tradition, reason and faith; and that
- the centrality of the invitation to dialogue requires Catholic schools to equally be clear about their Catholic identity and heritage and to be open and welcoming to all, (see MoA 3.1.2).

STATEMENT 3

High-level Commitments and Principles informing the living of the Ethos of the Catholic School through the dynamic expression of Characteristic Spirit

Acknowledging the rich variety present in its associate patrons and trustees and the specific role of patrons regarding the ethos of a Catholic School, APTCS asserts that the contemporary Catholic patrons and trustees will give lived expression to this ethos through their characteristic spirit by:

- building the Catholic educational 'communio' both with each other and within the schools of their diocese or Trust body through a commitment to the wider Catholic sector and not just the individual school based not on competition but on mutual collaboration, co-operation, cohesion, sharing, friendship and integration;
- enhancing the distinctive, yet complementary work of patrons, trustees, Boards of Management and school principals;
- ensuring that the relevant Religious Education programme approved for use in Catholic Schools in Ireland by the IEC² is provided, is allocated the required time and taught by teachers holding the qualifications stipulated by the IEC;
- ensuring the Catholic life of the school is resourced by facilities such as a dedicated chapel or prayer space, the provision of Chaplaincy services, the availability of retreats, regular Eucharistic liturgies and the visibility of Catholic symbols;
- providing for the on-going professional development, including an understanding and appreciation of the Catholic tradition and the founding intention, of the school leaders, teachers and Boards of Management;
- putting in place approved mechanisms by which the Patrons, Trustees and Boards of Management formally reflect on their Catholic ethos and related characteristic spirit of the school on a regular basis;
- providing training on all aspects of the ethos of the Catholic school for school leadership and staff and for Boards of Management;
- putting in place appropriate mechanisms to ensure that the Catholic School, through its lived characteristic spirit, is experienced by parents, families, pupils and staff as a place of welcome, respect, safety and inclusion and by which any 'hidden barriers' inhibiting this ethos are identified and eliminated;
- in particular by making make generous provision for pupils experiencing special needs and migrant pupils;

² Irish Episcopal Conference

- living the ethos of the Catholic school by an on-going critically reflective process in which the characteristic spirit of each school draws on the combination of the philosophy and practice of Catholic education generally and the specific founding intention of the school together with the real-world experience of our patrons, trustees, Boards of Management, principals, teachers, other staff, students and their parents / guardians; and
- promoting the following high-level principles which define the contemporary Catholic School with school leaders, school staff and Boards of Management. The Catholic School will:
 - 1) serve the educational mission of the Church, parents / guardians, our pupils and society and the wider common good through striving for excellence in all aspects of school life;
 - 2) ensure that faith development contributes to the full human development of each pupil in their care;
 - 3) journey together to respond to the invitation to be followers of Jesus, growing in faith and faithfulness, being open to the Divine in prayer, the work of justice and celebrating the presence of God in the Eucharistic community; and
 - 4) build links with the local communities, including the local faith communities, and be visibly engaged in the works of justice, care and inclusion.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE STATEMENTS FOR THE APTCS BOARD OF DIRECTORS

APTCS understands that our schools are Catholic because patrons and trustees are the guarantors of their Catholic ethos. APTCS is a co-guarantor to this understanding. Thus, as a company limited by guarantee and a registered charity APTCS, its Board of Directors and Employees are committed to:

- Witnessing to our Catholic ethos in everything we do;
- Providing compliant, transparent and accountable governance to fulfil our ecclesial, civic, civil and charitable duties and responsibilities; and
- Prudently managing our resources (including property and financial resources) not as an end in themselves but as the means by which we can serve our educational mission as an association.

A fuller articulation of the principle objects and Subsidiary and Ancillary objects of APTCS is outlined in Appendix 1 which follows.

APPENDIX 1

EXTRACT FROM APTCS MEMORANDUM OF ASSOCIATION

3. Principal Objects

- 3.1. The principal objects for which the Company is established are the advancement of Catholic religion and the advancement of education in accordance with Catholic Ethos through promoting best operational practice in the exercise of trusteeship and patronage of schools, including:
 - 3.1.1. promoting education in Ireland by enabling patrons and trustees to give contemporary expression to the founding intentions of their respective schools;
 - 3.1.2. promoting Catholic faith formation and dialogue with other faiths in Catholic schools and other education environments that include Catholic students or the involvement of Associate Trustees;
 - 3.1.3. enabling patrons and trustees to exercise their statutory obligations to their schools and their obligations in relation to Catholic Ethos;
 - 3.1.4. providing support to Associate Trustees in schools concerning governance and compliance, policies, property, trustees' obligations, patrons' duties, ethos and financial matters;
 - 3.1.5. enabling co-patrons and patron partners exercise their respective roles in Community and Comprehensive Schools and Designated Community Colleges.
 - 3.1.6. providing guidance and support to Associate Trustees in order that they carry out their legal and educational obligations in a coherent manner as set out in respective legislation, regulations and government department circulars; and
 - 3.1.7. working with the Secretariat of Secondary Schools, the Catholic Education Partnership and, should it be so determined, the Catholic Primary Schools Management Association, to promote co-operation and cohesion between the Company and these bodies.

4. Subsidiary and Ancillary Objects

- 4.1. The objects set out hereafter are exclusively subsidiary and ancillary to the principal objects set out above. These objects are to be pursued only for the attainment of those principal objects and any income generated therefrom is to be applied for the principal objects only. As subsidiary objects:
 - 4.1.1. to develop a joint collective position to respond to issues related to the exercise of trusteeship and patronage by Associate Trustees;
 - 4.1.2. to dialogue and discuss matters of mutual concern in relation to specific patron and trustee issues;
 - 4.1.3. to represent Associate Trustees in existing and emerging fora;
 - 4.1.4. to provide opportunity for collaboration and efficient use of resources;
 - 4.1.5. to promote and coordinate creativity and innovative approaches by Associate Trustees;
 - 4.1.6. to negotiate, where appropriate, with relevant parties on matters that are the direct and specific responsibilities of patrons and trustees;
 - 4.1.7. to provide facilities and other resources and to help maintain and finance such facilities and other resources as are conducive to the pursuit of the principal objects of the Company; and
 - 4.1.8. to provide such services connected with the principal objects of the Company as are considered to be of assistance and benefit in furthering the principal objects of the Company.