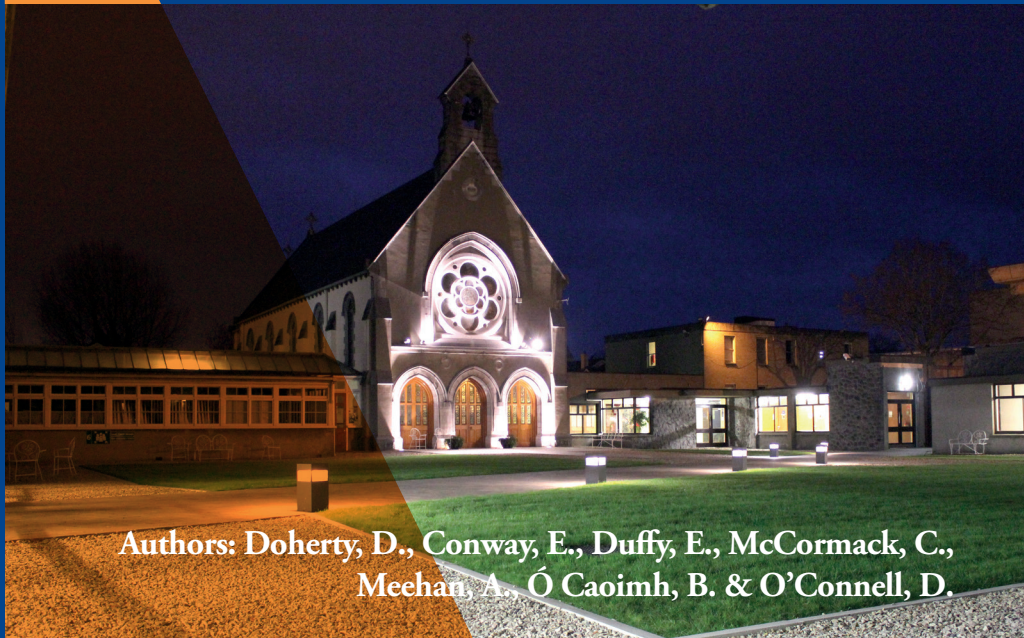# Global Researchers
Advancing Catholic Education

REPORT 2

Stakeholders in Catholic Schools in Ireland: Training, Knowledge and Support

Authors: Doherty, D., Conway, E., Duffy, E., McCormack, C., Meehan, A., Ó Caoimh, B. & O'Connell, D.

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Report 2: Stakeholders in Catholic Schools in Ireland: Training, Knowledge and Support

Acknowledgements:

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About the GRACE (Ireland) Research Project

Global Researchers Advancing Catholic Education (GRACE) is an international research-based partnership between academics in universities and Catholic education bodies across three different continents (Mary Immaculate College, Limerick; Notre Dame University, Fremantle, Australia; Roche Center for Catholic Education, Boston College; St Mary's University, London; University of Glasgow; and the International Office for Catholic Education). GRACE provides an opportunity for scholars and practitioners of Catholic education and theology in their respective countries to affirm, study, collaborate, and respond meaningfully to challenges in Catholic education. Among its aims is to strengthen the argument for the importance of faith-based schools in a plural society.

This GRACE (Ireland)[1] research project – entitled *Identity and Ethos in Catholic Primary and Secondary Schools in Ireland, Exploring the Attitudes and Behaviours of Stakeholders* – aims to establish a clear baseline and a set of signposts for the advancing of Catholic education at primary and secondary levels in the Republic of Ireland. The objectives of the research are:

- to complete a stakeholder mapping that identifies all the relevant actors and assesses their vision and roles – actual and potential – in contributing to the provision of Catholic education at both primary and secondary levels
- to capture and classify the values that underpin stakeholders' approaches
- to establish stakeholders' capacity to progress and further Catholic education.

Four Irish ecclesial documents underpin this research:
- The Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference pastoral letter for Catholic schools *Vision 08* (ICBC 2008)
- *Share the Good News – The National Directory for Catechesis in Ireland* (IEC 2010)
- *Understanding and living the ethos in a Catholic voluntary secondary school: a process centred on conversations* (CSP 2016)
- *Understanding and living the ethos in a Catholic primary school: a process centred on conversations* (CSP 2019).

The Overview to the six reports considers in some detail the underlying vision for Catholic schools that is charted in these documents with reference to how identity and ethos are expected to be amplified in Catholic schools.

Acronyms

AMCSS Association of Management of Catholic Secondary Schools
APTCS Association of Patrons and Trustees of Catholic Schools
BoM Board of Management
CCE Congregation for Catholic Education
CEP Catholic Education Partnership
CESC Catholic Education Services Committee
CPD Continuing Professional Development
CSP Catholic Schools Partnership
CPSMA Catholic Primary Schools Management Association

CT Catechesi Tradendae
GDC General Directory for Catechesis
ICBC Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference
IEC Irish Episcopal Conference
JMB Joint Managerial Body for Secondary Schools
**RE** Religious Education
SGN Share the Good News
SSS Secretariat for Secondary Schools

[1] With the support of the Mater Dei Centre for Catholic Education DCU in the analysis of the data and write-up of reports.

Key Findings

- At primary level, almost a third (32%) of Board of Management (BoM) members, over half of principals and deputy principals (54%), and 60 per cent of teachers report receiving no training or continuing professional development (CPD) from their patrons or trusts to assist them in their roles. At secondary level, 14 per cent of BoM members, over a fifth (22%) of principals and deputy principals, and 46 per cent of Religious Education (RE) teachers state likewise. Hereafter, where principals are referenced in this report, research findings also include deputy principals.

- Of those who received training, 29 per cent of primary school BoM members and a comparable percentage (28%) of secondary school BoM members experience training as ongoing or as occurring at least once a year or more. This applies to just over a quarter (26%) of primary school principals and 60 per cent of secondary school principals, 5 per cent of primary school teachers, and 46 per cent of secondary school RE teachers. For the remainder, training was once-off or less often than yearly.

- Slightly less than three-quarters (71%) of primary school BoM members and more than half (54%) of secondary BoM members who received training believe that the Catholic ethos was not covered in that training to a large extent. The same can also be said of under three-quarters (70%) of primary principals and over a third (38%) of secondary principals.

- Among those who received training, on a scale of 1–10, where 1 equals not useful and 10 equates to very useful, over half (58%) of primary teachers and almost two-thirds (64%) of RE teachers awarded their training a score of 6 (out of 10) or higher, and 8 per cent of teachers at primary level and 14 per cent of secondary RE teachers awarded it a score of 10.

- In the primary cohort, 40 per cent of the combined staff cohorts at primary level disagreed or strongly disagreed that opportunities for faith development are offered to them, while the same applied to 29 per cent of all staff in the secondary context.

- At primary level, 80 per cent of the combined cohorts of BoM respondents, principals and teachers are unsure or say they have not heard of the Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference pastoral letter for Catholic schools: *Vision 08* (ICBC, 2008). At secondary level, this applies to 60 per cent of the total BoM, principal and RE teacher cohorts.

- Across these cohorts, of those who have heard of *Vision 08* at primary level, almost three in five (59%) report little to no familiarity with it. The same applies to over two in five (42%) of the combined secondary BoM, principal and RE teacher cohorts.

- Of the combined BoM and staff cohorts at primary level, 83 per cent are unsure or state they have not heard of *Share the Good News*: *The National Directory for Catechesis in Ireland* (*SGN* hereafter) (IEC, 2010). The same can be said of almost three-quarters (72%) of secondary BoM members, principals and RE teachers.

- At primary level, more than half (58%) of the combined BoM and staff cohorts who have heard of *Share the Good News* have little to no familiarity with it. This is also the case for almost half (49%) of the secondary BoM, principal and RE teacher cohorts.

- Over three-quarters (78%) of primary BoM members and staff are unsure or report that they have not heard of *Understanding and living the ethos in a Catholic primary school: a process centred on conversations* (CSP 2019). At secondary level, and in relation to *Understanding and living the ethos in a Catholic voluntary secondary school* (CSP 2016a), the same applies to 44 per cent of BoM members, principals and RE teachers.

- Of those who have heard of the aforementioned documents, in the primary context over half of board members and staff (52%) have little to no familiarity with it. At secondary level, this applies to almost one-third of the combined BoM, principal and RE teacher cohorts.
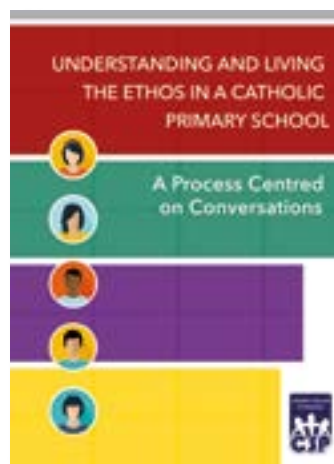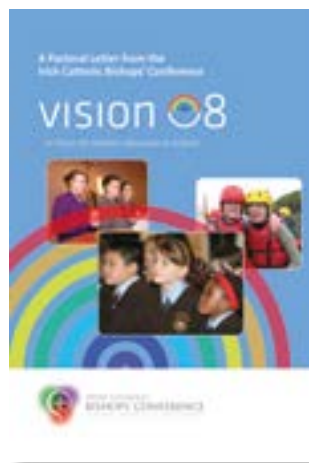
Introduction

Four Irish ecclesial documents underpin this research. They include the Irish Bishops' Conference pastoral letter for Catholic schools *Vision 08* (ICBC 2008); S*hare the Good News: The National Directory for Catechesis In Ireland* (IEC 2010); *Understanding and living the ethos in a Catholic voluntary secondary school: a process centred on conversations* (CSP 2016a) and *Understanding and living the ethos in a Catholic primary school: a process centred on conversation*s (CSP 2019). The Overview to this series of reports considers in some detail the underlying vision for Catholic schools that is charted in these documents with reference to how identity and ethos are expected to be amplified in Catholic schools by those charged with the task at primary and secondary levels.

The current report focuses principally on the patron- and trustee-led role in training provision and adult faith development support. It is divided into three sections and begins by précising a lengthier narrative (see Overview) that details key aspects of what each document identifies as central to Catholic identity and ethos. It continues by summarising what the documents assert about the training and adult faith development needed to equip BoMs and school staff to actualise these concepts. It then considers pertinent literature from patrons and trustees.

Section Two presents an analysis of the apposite quantitative and qualitative research findings on training, faith development, and research participants' awareness and knowledge of the four ecclesial documents.

The third and final section brings the vision of the documents into dialogue with research findings through discussion and cross reference with further findings from accompanying reports in this series. It concludes by offering salient recommendations.

Section One

The Bishops' Pastoral Letter for Catholic Schools *Vision 08* (ICBC 2008)

This pastoral letter sets out the Irish bishops' understanding of Catholic education and its particular identity and ethos (ICBC 2008). The document can be summarised as follows:

- Catholic education is inspired by Jesus Christ. It is person-centred, seeking to develop the full potential of each person.

- Catholic education proposes a sacramental view of reality, helping pupils to see God 'in the bits and pieces of everyday life'.

- Catholic education takes place in open, happy, stimulating and mutually respectful communities.
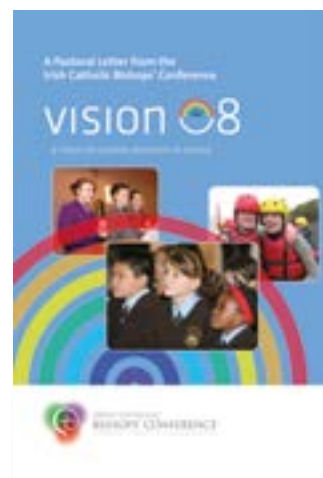
- Catholic education values intellectual and practical reason, promoting dialogue and understanding between faith, tradition, culture and heritage.

- Catholic education values tolerance and inclusiveness. Catholic schools welcome pupils of other traditions, faiths and none, seeing diversity as offering opportunities for deeper understanding among people holding diverse convictions.

- Catholic education seeks to enable pupils to act with integrity and justice, in pursuit of the common good in an imperfect world, and to act as stewards of creation.
  (ICBC 2008a, cited in IEC 2010, p.145)

While *Vision 08* does not address itself to individual roles within the school, it emphasises the need for 'the ongoing professional development' of staff and for 'the training and formation of board members' and speaks of a 'commitment to the personal and professional nurture of all school personnel' as indispensable to the life of the school (ICBC 2008b, p.7).

Share the Good News: The National Directory for Catechesis in Ireland (IEC 2010)

Share the Good News: The National Directory for Catechesis in Ireland (ICE 2010) reiterates the core features of a Catholic school as laid out *Vision 08* (IEC 2010, pp.142–145) and also identifies six fundamental tasks that are informative for all whose roles carry responsibility for RE in Catholic schools. These include:

> promoting knowledge of the faith; liturgical education; moral formation; teaching to pray; education for community life (including the ecumenical dimension); and missionary initiation (including inter-religious dialogue)
> (IEC 2010, p.142).

On repeated occasions, it underscores the importance of initial and continuing training for BoM members (IEC 2010, p.108, p.201, p.207) who are 'responsible for the development of the school on behalf of the Patron/Trustees, with the support of management bodies' (IEC 2010, p.203). It is made clear that the initial training of BoMs should include a specific focus on Catholic ethos (IEC 2010, p.207). The BoM's key role in ensuring that the school's mission statement, accompanying policies and decision-making are in tandem with this ethos is emphasised. Its responsibility to support the principal and staff in actualising the Catholic ethos in the school is also underlined, along with the need for the BoM to review ethos-related issues at least annually and 'report on this to the Patron' (IEC 2010, p.207).

The priority of 'in-depth and continuing formation' of principals (IEC 2010, p.146, p.157), together with the 'ongoing education and training' of all who hold school leadership roles (IEC 2010, p.203, p.207), is also stressed. *SGN* highlights that a fundamental responsibility of the principal is to 'encourage, develop and promote' the Catholic ethos of their school and also to ensure the provision of occasions for reflection on the spiritual and religious well-being of the school community' (IEC 2010, pp.207–208). Notably, nine years after the publication of *SGN*, the Genesis Report (CPSMA/CSP/AMSCC 2019), which reports on research carried out on behalf of a number of the key representative bodies in Irish Catholic education, reiterates the need for particular attention to be focused on 'training to develop Catholic school leaders of the future' (p.59).

SGN also affirms the Irish bishops' support for the training and Continuing Professional Development (CPD) of teachers (IEC 2010, p.201, p.214) and makes it clear that while 'the freedom of conscience of teachers in matters of personal religious belief and practice' will be respected, all teachers are expected to promote the ethos, mission statement and policies of their school. To support this, new teachers, as part of their induction, should have 'an opportunity to focus on the Catholic character of the school' (IEC 2010, p.208). All staff should also be facilitated in taking part in a review of ethos each year (IEC 2010, p.208, p.215).

The document points to the supports offered to principals and teachers by diocesan advisors (IEC 2010, p.146, p.156, pp.158–159, p.209) and diocesan education offices (IEC 2010, p.46, p.198). It also stresses the need for effective collaboration between dioceses and religious congregations and their trustee bodies in order to establish 'appropriate networks and strategies for the up-skilling of school management and staff' (IEC 2010, p.200).

In a reiteration of *Catechesi Tradendae* (John Paul II 1979, par.43) and the *General Directory for Catechesis* (GDC) (Congregation for the Clergy 2017), *SGN* also affirms the centrality of adult faith development, calling it the 'chief form of catechesis … since it deals with persons who are capable of an adherence that is fully responsible … [and] all the other forms, which are indeed necessary, are in some way oriented to it' (IEC 2010, p.102). Despite this recognition, which is ubiquitously found in official teaching, recent Irish research identifies that a lack of 'appropriately resourced adult catechesis' (Doherty 2020, p.167) persists in the Irish Catholic context, making it 'one of the major issues facing the Church today' (Doherty 2020, p.190). Nevertheless, in *SGN* it is recognised as 'fundamental to the ethos overseen by the Board of Management and lived and celebrated in the school' (IEC 2010, p.120). Consequently, BoMs are advised to 'support and facilitate individuals and groups of teachers in taking initiatives designed to help them to engage with their own ongoing faith development' (IEC 2010, p.147).

Denoting the school principal 'as a spiritual leader', *SGN* highlights their crucial role in supporting faith in schools and emphasises their need to develop 'a more explicit understanding of the philosophical, theological and spiritual underpinnings of Catholic education', together with 'skills that help teachers, parents and students grasp the importance and challenge of the Christian message in a way that is appropriate to their development' (Tuohy et al. 2000, cited in IEC 2010, p.208).

Finally, *SGN* addresses seven faith development objectives that are augmented by 32 indicators of achievement with regard to schools (IEC 2010, pp.204–210).

Understanding and living the ethos in a Catholic voluntary secondary school: a process centred on conversations (CSP 2016a)

As its title suggests, this manual has the aim of assisting secondary schools to comprehend and express their Catholic ethos and endeavours to enrich this ethos through a whole-school, self-facilitated and dialogical process. Defined as 'a shared responsibility between trustees and the school community' (CSP 2016a, p.5), the process, which is designed to be cyclical and ongoing, focuses on the identification and adoption of a range of ethos-enhancement targets which number 33 in total (CSP 2016a, pp.30–32) and coalesce under three headings:

- **Our school's identity and distinctiveness are rooted in its founding story, and the life of the school reflects the inspiration and values of that story**
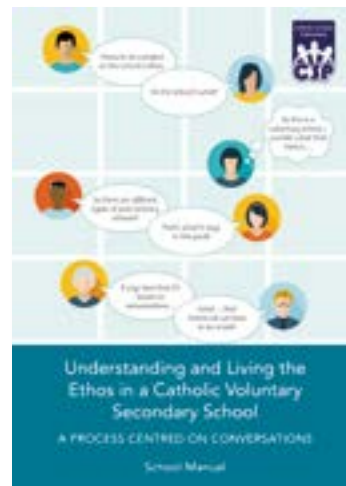
Reflections of the accuracy of this statement will be found in a confidence amongst BoM members and staff who are able to positively articulate the school's founding story and its underlying and lasting values. These will be embedded in all school policies, literature, cross-curricular teaching, and school prayer, and reflected in the visual imagery and symbolism on display. Emphasis will also be firmly placed on providing opportunities for new and existing staff, as well as for parents and students, to develop their understanding of the school's ethos (CSP 2016a, p.30).

- **Our school continues the ministry of Christ**

Supported by its trustees, the school will take steps to foster a range of faith development (also referred to as spiritual development and faith formation) opportunities for the whole school community – students, staff, BoM members and parents (CSP 2016a, pp.30–31). Facilitating a deepening awareness of what it means to be a follower of Jesus Christ will inform its life and activities. This awareness will be sustained by the celebration of the liturgical seasons, regular community and personal prayer, social justice outreach, and the provision of ongoing training for BoM members and CPD for staff to allow them to 'deepen their understanding of the school's ethos' and to 'develop their understanding of Jesus Christ' (CSP 2016a, p.30).
Compassion and care for others will be articulated in the school's mission statement and reflected in its pastoral processes. RE will hold a central place in the school curriculum through appropriate resourcing and timetabling, and the school will involve itself in Catholic Schools' Week and in collaborative activities with other Catholic schools in the local, national and global contexts (CSP 2016a, pp.30–31).

- **Our school is in dialogue with the Church and the world around us**

The school, aware of its role in the parish and diocesan community, will consciously develop 'deeper relationships with the local Church' as part of its ethos (CSP 2016a, p.31). In its curriculum, it will embed Catholic social teaching, 'with its emphases on the dignity of the human person, the

importance of family life, solidarity with those in need, promotion of peace and justice, and the stewardship of creation' (CSP 2016a, p.31). Compassionate right relationship with God, self, others and the planet, vivified by a reflective Christian spirituality, will be at the heart of a Catholic school. It will be reflected in school policies, local and global charitable activities, social justice outreach, the celebration of diversity, and the support of students and families of other faiths or beliefs that 'move beyond mere tolerance to a deeper encounter between people' (CSP 2016a, pp.30–31).

Understanding and living the ethos in a Catholic Primary School: a process centred on conversations (Veritas 2019)

This document shares the intentions of its secondary counterpart and also presents a self-facilitated, dialogical and cyclical process that emanates from the patron, is initiated by the BoM, and involves representatives of the whole school community. Centred around an ethos-reflection questionnaire, the process focuses on the extent to which five core characteristics of a Catholic school are reflected in the school. Each characteristic is underpinned by a series of targets, numbering 40 in total (CSP 2019, pp.16–20). While the five characteristics – and their corresponding targets and actions – express an analogous philosophy to those outlined at secondary level, they employ somewhat differing language and include the following:
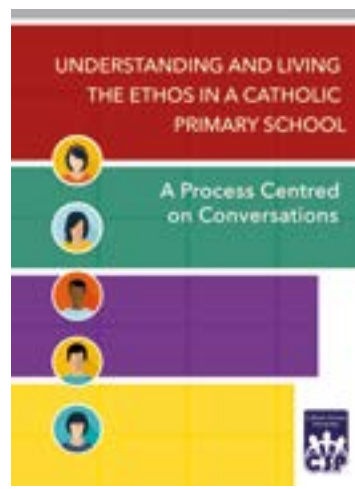
- **The school is founded on a Catholic understanding of education**

Espousing a 'Christian concept of the world' (CSP 2019, p.8) and founded on a Catholic anthropology underpinned by Gospel values, the Catholic school exists to serve the 'academic, physical, social, spiritual and religious development' of its pupils (CSP 2019, p.16). It is a locus of welcome and inclusion for those of other faiths and none, where 'the religious freedom and the personal conscience of individual students and their families must be respected' in a spirit of dialogue and 'culture of encounter' (CSP 2019, p.8).

- **The school is a Catholic community**

The school is rooted in the three interdependent communities of parents, the school and the parish. Parents are recognised as the foundational community and the 'most important educators of their children' (CSP 2019, p.17).

- **The school is an agent of personal growth and social transformation**

Right relationship with God, oneself, others, and the earth animates the life of the school, and pupils are awakened to the link between faith and justice. Compassion and support for those who suffer or are disadvantaged, educationally or otherwise, are the hallmarks of relationships within the school.

- **Religious education is an integral part of the life of the school**

Three key aspects of the RE programme are emphasised:

- It is 'inspired by *Share the Good News – The National Directory for Catechesis in Ireland.'*
- It includes 'faith formation, prayer and sacramental experiences, and a growing awareness of being stewards of God's creation.'
- 'There is support for staff, principals, pupils, parents and members of boards in opening their hearts and minds to the presence of God.'
  (CSP 2019, p.19)

- **We are called to be followers of Christ**

The manual reinforces that what distinguishes a Catholic school is its rootedness in the life and teaching of Jesus Christ as 'the One who ennobles people, gives meaning to human life, and is the model which the Catholic school offers to its pupils' (CCE 1977, n.33–37 cited in CSP 2019, p.8).

Training for board members and regular in-service for staff on Catholic identity, school ethos and spiritual development (CSP 2019, pp.52–55, p.59) are also concerns of this document. As at secondary level, it is expected that 'members of staff are provided with opportunities to develop their understanding of Jesus Christ' (CSP 2019, p.20) and it is envisaged that adults associated with the school would 'participate in opportunities for spiritual support and growth provided in partnership with the diocese and other bodies' (CSP 2019, p.19), with the hope indicated that 'all staff are as proficient in speaking about the area of spiritual development as about the area of academic development' (CSP 2019, p.62).

Responsibility for Training Provision and Staff Faith Development in Support of Catholic Education in Ireland

Catholic education in Ireland has a multifaceted and complex system of responsibility, oversight and representation (APTCS 2022; Coolahan et al. 2012; CSP 2016b; McGraw and Tiernan 2022), with responsibility for training provision and faith development being a shared and delegated task involving a number of actors.

The Primary Sector

At primary level, the local bishop holds ultimate authority and responsibility and, as patron, delegates some of this to the BoM (CPSMA 2016). Both patrons and schools are assisted in their respective roles by diocesan education offices, diocesan education secretaries and diocesan advisors (IEC 2010, p.146; CPSMA 2016, p.84).

Support is also provided to patrons, trustees, BoMs and principals by the Catholic Primary Schools Management Association (CPSMA). Among its functions is the provision of training for BoMs on issues such as 'child protection, appointment procedures, the board of management, board finances, legal issues, anti-bullying and data protection' (CPSMA n.d.). While ongoing training on Catholic ethos is not

directly referenced in this list of available training, the organisation's **Board of management handbook 2016** explores school ethos in detail (CPSMA 2016, pp.24–27) and provides an open-access ethos-training video link. It also reprints, in full, a series of extracts from **SGN** that specifically deal with 'Children's Religious Education in School' (CPSMA 2016, pp.13–17; IEC 2010, pp.140–148) and 'Faith Development in Catholic Schools' (CPSMA 2016, pp.18–21; IEC 2010, pp.204–210). The handbook also reiterates the understanding of a Catholic school set out in **Vision 08** (CPSMA 2016, p.22, pp.24–25) and recommends reference to this pastoral letter as an important document when drawing up an ethos statement.

The Secondary Sector

At secondary level, while primacy continues to reside with the local ordinary, patronage and trusteeship for Catholic voluntary secondary schools rest principally with religious congregations and/or their trust companies. Individual congregations, with and through their trust bodies, commit to support the work of the BoMs and principals of their schools through training, information provision, publications and recruitment assistance (JMB/AMCSS/SSS 2021, p.9). In common with the primary sector, diocesan education offices, education secretaries and diocesan advisors are also tasked with exercising a training and support role (**SGN** 2010, p.198).

At national level, a number of representative and managerial organisations also exist to support Catholic schools. These include the Catholic Education Partnership (CEP), which was established in 2020 and replaced the Catholic Schools Partnership (CSP). It holds an advocacy and coordinating remit for primary, secondary, third level and adult Catholic education, and while it does not involve itself directly in training provision, it is recognised as having 'a lead role in supporting the formation needs of the family of Catholic education communities' (JMB/AMCSS/SSS 2021, p.11). The CEP also exercises 'a governance and ownership role' (JMB/AMCSS/SSS 2021, p.11) with regard to the Secretariat for Secondary Schools (SSS) and the Association of Patrons and Trustees of Catholic Schools (APTCS). The former is made up of two divisions: the Joint Managerial Board for Secondary Schools (JMB) and the Association of Management of Catholic Secondary Schools (AMCSS). These bodies offer 'professional development, support and advice' (JMB/AMCSS/SSS 2023a) to all voluntary secondary schools and provide collective representation at national level. Management-related training for BoM members and principals also falls under the JMB/AMCSS remit and a broad range of

available training is listed on the organisations' website (JMB/AMCSS/SSS 2023a). While ethos training is not specifically referred to in the list of services provided, a commitment to providing support for school ethos is clearly expressed (JMB/AMCSS/SSS 2023b).

Also among their range of support publications is the **Manual for boards of management of Catholic voluntary secondary schools** (2021). While this guide makes no reference to **SGN** or to U**nderstanding and living the ethos in a Catholic voluntary secondary school,** it refers to the conceptualisation of Catholic education set out in **Vision 08** (JMB/AMCSS/SSS 2021, p.11) and, in a chapter entitled 'The Religious and Educational Character of the School (JMB/AMCSS/SSS 2021, pp.14–19), it addresses itself to the key aims of a Catholic school, setting out specific areas of responsibility for trustees, BoMs and principals with regard to school ethos. Its contents also reflect and align with many of the faith development indicators of achievement outlined in **SGN** and the ethos-related targets suggested in the secondary edition of **Understanding and living the ethos** (JMB/AMCSS/SSS 2021, p.6, p.15).

While the manual does not specifically address the faith development of staff, it does affirm the BoM's responsibility to ensure the ongoing 'professional development of staff through support for in-service training and qualifications' (JMB/AMCSS/SSS 2021, p.62).

The second organisation for which the CEP exercises a governance role is the Association of Patrons and Trustees of Catholic Schools (APTCS). Established in 2021, it currently represents 346 voluntary secondary school and 96 community schools under joint patronage and provides 'services and advice to Patrons and Trustees on ethos, property and financial matters' (APTCS, 2023). Its vision statement commits to working in partnership with its patrons and trustees and with the CEP, the SSS and the CPSMA in order to 'provide and contribute to initial and ongoing professional development for key personnel within the Catholic secondary school system (especially for patrons, trustees and management)' (APTCS 2022, p.6). In conjunction with the SSS, it provides induction training for new BoM members (JMB/AMCSS/SSS 2021, p.23).

Section One above has summarised the aims and aspirations of the four episcopal documents with regard to Catholic education and its identity and ethos. It has pointed to the documents' collective recognition of the importance of initial and ongoing training and faith development opportunities to support school personnel in advancing Catholic education and sketched where responsibility resides for the provision of these supports.

Methodology

This mixed-methods study employed an explanatory sequential design whereby a large body of quantitative data was initially gathered by means of an online survey. This process was followed by a smaller qualitative strand of semi-structured interviews designed to explain and elaborate on the quantitative results (Creswell 2022; Shorten and Smith 2017). This design allows the quantitative data to inform the questions to be explored during the qualitative strand; integration is further enhanced when qualitative analysis uncovers how the qualitative findings help explain the quantitative results in more depth (Creswell 2022).

Survey questionnaires were distributed to four cohorts of secondary and primary school stakeholders. At primary school level, these included members of BoMs, principals (including deputy principals), teachers, and other school staff (including ancillary, support, and administrative staff). In the secondary school context, these included BoM members, principals (including deputy principals), teachers of RE, and all other teaching staff. To take account of the distinctions in the two contexts, the surveys incorporated several additional or differently worded questions specific to each environment. The table below gives a breakdown of the number of respondents at both levels.

Table 1 Number of survey respondents at primary and second levels

Cohort	Primary	Secondary	Total
Board of Management	1,162	95	1,257
Principal or Deputy Principal	1,111	117	1,228
Teachers - Classroom or Subject	794	302	1,096
RE Teacher		129	129
Other Staff	122	74	196
Total	3,189	717	3,906

At the close of each questionnaire, respondents were invited to self-select for follow-up interviews by inserting their email address. All were assured that this information would be decoupled from their survey responses to protect anonymity. As a result, 52 interviews were conducted, 28 at primary level and 24 at second level.

Survey data were collated and analysed thematically by means of frequency tables and cross tabulations. Qualitative data were analysed thematically using NVivo software (for a more detailed methodology, see the Overview in this series). Section Two will present research findings pertinent to such provision. As indicated, in all cases where principals are referenced, research finding also include deputy principals.

Section Two

## Research Findings on Training Among the Primary and Secondary School Cohorts

At primary level, during the first phase of the research, the relevant quantitative questions on training/CPD were posed to BoM members, principals and teachers only. At secondary level, they were asked of BoM members, principals and RE teachers only. Each cohort was asked if they had received training and/or professional development from their patron body. BoM members and principals who indicated that they received training were asked a follow-up question on the extent to which the Catholic ethos was covered in that training, while teachers (primary) and RE teachers (secondary) were asked about the training's usefulness.

Given the nature of the specific roles they perform in their schools, and taking cognisance of the ways in which they interface with patrons and trusts, each cohort was asked the questions about training in a particular way, applying the language that is generally used among each cohort. Therefore, while the findings are comparable across roles, the section to follow presents the responses discretely for each cohort based on role at both school levels.

Quantitative Findings on Training for Boards of Management

Slightly over two-thirds (68%) of primary BoM members and 86 per cent of the same cohort at secondary level stated they have received training from their patron or trust to specifically prepare them to serve on the BoM of a Catholic school. Of those who have received such training, over a quarter (29%) at primary level and a similar percentage (28%) at secondary level reported that it was provided on an ongoing basis (or at least once a year). Almost three-quarters (71% at primary and 72% at secondary) reported that it was offered on a once-off basis or less frequently than once a year. Figure 2.1 shows the extent to which BoM members at both levels believe the Catholic ethos was covered in the training they received.

Figure 2.1 Extent to which Catholic ethos was covered in the training provided to BoM members
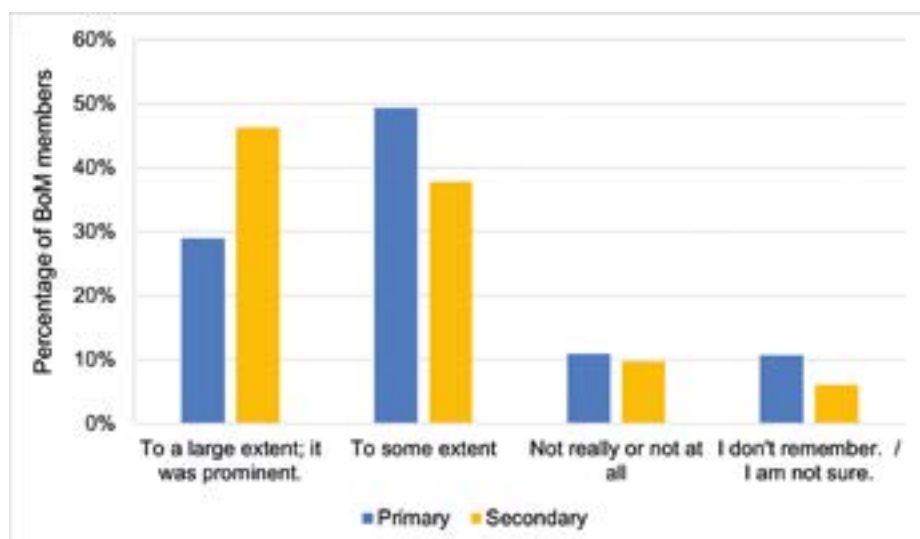
As Figure 2.1 shows, over a quarter (29%) of primary BoM members and less than half (46%) of their secondary counterparts who received training believe the Catholic ethos was covered to a large extent. Almost one in two at primary level (49%) and close to two in five (38%) at secondary level believe it was covered to some extent. Over one in five (22%) of this cohort at primary level and 16 per cent at secondary level either do not remember or believe that the Catholic ethos was not really or not at all covered in the training they received.

Quantitative Findings on Training/CPD for Principals

Under half (46%) of primary principals have received professional development from their patron/trust to 'encourage, develop and promote the ethos' of their school. This compares less favourably with over three-quarters (78%) of the same cohort at secondary level who stated they have received training from their patron or trust 'for their role as a faith leader'.

Of those who have received such training, just over a quarter (26%) at primary and a majority (60%) at secondary level reported that it was provided on an ongoing basis (or at least once a year). Almost three-quarters (74%) of primary principals reported that it was offered on a once-off basis (or less frequently than once a year), while this applied to less than half (40%) of the secondary cohort. Figures 2.2 and 2.3 show the extent to which principals at both levels believe the Catholic ethos was covered in the respective training they received.

Figure 2.2 Extent to which their role to 'encourage, develop and promote the ethos' of their school was covered in the CPD provided for primary school principals
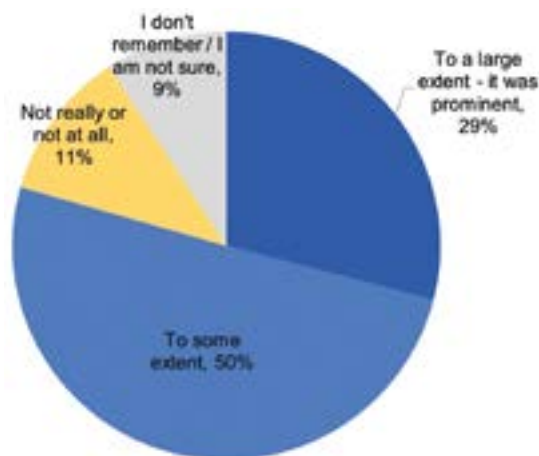
Figure 2.3 Extent to which Catholic ethos was covered in the training provided for secondary school principals
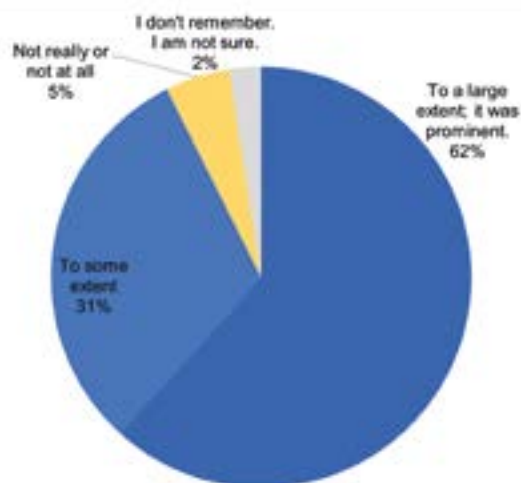
As Figures 2.2 and 2.3 show, there are notable differences between primary and secondary schools in respect of the extent to which principals report that the Catholic ethos was covered in the training/CDP they received – 70 per cent of primary school principals report that the Catholic ethos was not prominent or present to a large extent. This is considerably higher than the corresponding figure (38%) among secondary school principals.

Quantitative Findings on Training/CPD for Teachers in Primary Schools and RE Teachers in Secondary Schools

The proportion of primary teachers who stated they have received 'professional development from their patron/trust to assist them in their teaching of Religious Education' was 40 per cent, while just over half (54%) of RE teachers stated they have received training from their patron/trust 'for their role'. Of those who have received such training, just 5 per cent of primary teachers and 46 per cent of RE teachers reported that it was provided on an ongoing basis, or at least once a year, while the vast majority of primary teachers (95%) and more than half (54%) of secondary RE teachers reported that it was offered on a once-off basis or less frequently than once a year.

Both teacher cohorts were asked to indicate, on a scale of 1–10, the extent to which the training they received was useful or otherwise. Values on this scale ranged from 1 = not useful to 10 = very useful. Figures 2.4 and 2.5 show the distribution of responses from teachers at primary level and RE teachers at secondary level.

Figure 2.4 Distribution of responses from primary teachers in respect of the usefulness, or otherwise, of the professional development provided by patron bodies/trusts
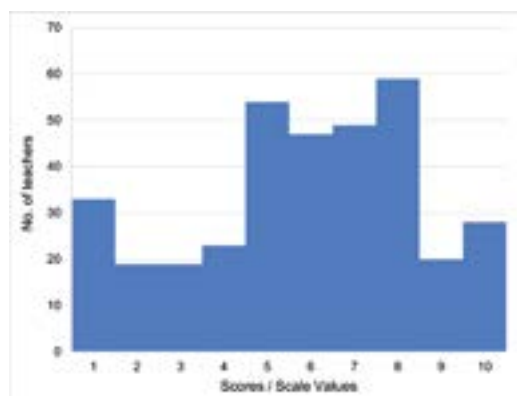
Figure 2.5 Distribution of responses from secondary RE teachers in respect of the usefulness, or otherwise, of the professional development provided by patron bodies/trusts
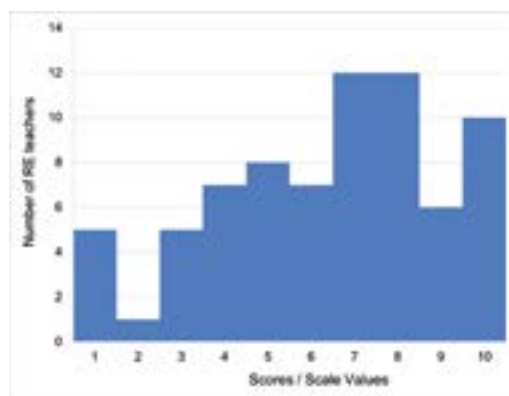
As Figures 2.4 and 2.5 show, over half (58%) of primary teachers and almost two-thirds (64%) of RE teachers awarded the training a score of 6 (out of 10) or higher, while 8 per cent at primary level and 14 per cent of secondary RE teachers awarded it a score of 10.

In summary, as Table 2.2 shows, BoM and staff respondents at primary level recorded significantly lower levels of training than at secondary level. Table 2.3 also illustrates that while ongoing training was almost on a par for board members at both school levels, the large majority of the two BoM cohorts received no ongoing training. Of all cohorts, principals at secondary level received most ongoing training and primary teachers received least by a large margin. As shown in Table 2.4, close to three-quarters of primary BoM and principal respondents who received training reported that Catholic ethos was not prominent in that training, while secondary principals again fared better and received most ethos-related training. Teachers were not asked about the amount of training they received on ethos during phase one of the study.

Table 2.2 Percentages who received no training or CPD

	Primary	Secondary
BoM	32%	14%
Principals	54%	22%
Teachers/ RE Teachers	60%	46%

Table 2.3 Percentages in receipt of ongoing training

	Primary	Secondary
BoM	29%	28%
Principals	26%	60%
Teachers/ RE Teachers	5%	46%

Table 2.4 Percentages where Catholic ethos was prominent in training

	Primary	Secondary
BoM	29%	46%
Principals	29%	62%

Qualitative Findings on Training for Boards of Management

Findings that emerged from the interview stage of the study (phase 2) supported the apparent dearth of prominent attention accorded to training on ethos, and over half (57%) of primary and 83 per cent of secondary BoM interview participants commented on a need for more training of this nature. At primary level, there was a recognition that 'lots of training … on matters regarding complaints and governance' was available, but there existed a lack of 'faith-based' training. At this school level, a need for more in-person training delivery was also remarked on, with a participant commenting that 'they issue lovely booklets (on the role of the board), but when you're actually in a room with people who know what they're speaking about, it's far more valuable'. Three participants from the secondary BoM cohort specifically acknowledged training provided by the JMB, with one remarking that ethos-focused content 'formed maybe half an hour of that time'.

> *At primary level, there was a recognition that 'lots of training … on matters regarding complaints and governance' was available, but there existed a lack of 'faith-based' training.*

Not all of the primary BoM cohort agreed that increased training is a requirement, however, and one participant expressed the view that 'the Church has provided training over many decades and people have choices for what they can get engaged in, as there is so much that is already there'.

At secondary level, some positivity regarding access to trustee support was also articulated, with one participant commenting, 'I feel as a board member, I could pick up the phone and ring the Trust link person instantly … if I'm not too sure of what I should be doing or could be doing … I have no hesitation in ringing them to ask them.' However, some uncertainty was expressed by two secondary board members around what precisely patrons and trusts expected of BoMs with regard to supporting ethos. More clear guidance on this was requested so that ethos did not lose priority, because 'when you come to a board of management, you can oftentimes get caught up in child protection and finance'. A lack of confidence

around the ability to shape ethos-related activity at board level was also recorded by two participants at this school level, with one commenting, 'we are great at rubber stamping what's brought to us by the principal (but) that process by which a board member can influence the agenda (around ethos) is something I had to dig deep to find'. Resourcing deficits were also seen as an obstacle to the nurturing of identity and ethos. Calling for more patron/trust investment, a secondary board member noted that 'it takes engagement and money … and if you want to do it on the cheap, then have a talk once a year for the converted – you're wasting your time, but you can do it'.

Qualitative Findings on Training Provision for Principals

Two out of eight primary principals who participated in phase two of the research felt adequately supported with regard to training and commended a 'very proactive' patron and engaged diocesan advisor. At secondary level, all principals who participated at interview acknowledged some training on appointment. Individually, they indicated types of training such as an hour-long input from the patrons' officers, or a full training day on ethos, or advice provided by experienced principals on how they foster ethos. Favourable comments were made regarding the quality of initial training provided by four of the secondary school trusts as well as on the positive nature of joining with other schools when training:

> It was really good for my middle leaders to hear from people from other trusts. Hearing from other schools was great and all of those meetings opened with prayer. So, I think that was really good exposure to see that it wasn't just me trying to do something in this school, that actually, it is an expectation in Catholic schools.

At primary level too, the majority identified a need for a greater emphasis on ethos-training and on 'what Catholic actually means in practice'. A comment was made that 'you have to understand where people are coming from … you can't presume that people have faith or knowledge, so we do need instruction because if we don't have the very basics of faith then how are we meant to pass them on?'.

Also at primary level, there was a call from principals for greater support in the form of in-service, retreat provision, and liturgical education for younger teachers who 'need to understand the *Grow in Love* programme and know the basics of the Mass and prayers'. This need for liturgical and RE training was echoed at secondary level, with the request made for more emphasis on 'how to lead liturgy, how to lead practise of the faith'. Among the secondary cohort, a principal also pointed to the need for trust bodies to be 'a little more critical, especially of the Religious Education that is being taught in their schools'.

> 66 *You can't presume that people have faith or knowledge, so we do need instruction because if we don't have the very basics of faith then how are we meant to pass them on?* 99

Resource scarcity was again lamented at both school levels. This was expressed by two primary principals in terms of an absence of mentorship and support personnel, with the observation made that 'we need priests and religious people who have a very good interpretation of the Gospel' to deliver in-service. In the secondary context, it was expressed in terms of limited resources being targeted 'towards governance issues and not … ethos'.

Qualitative Findings on Training for Primary Teachers and Secondary RE Teachers

During phase two of the research, primary teachers were less vocal on the need for improved ethos-training than were BoM members and principals. However, the need for 'more regular training on the RE curriculum' was endorsed by one primary teacher. Among secondary RE teachers, half of this interview cohort did not recall any training for their role in a Catholic school, and more engagement from trust bodies in this regard was identified as necessary. Two RE teachers flagged a need for reassurance that trust bodies are taking an active interest in their schools, with one commenting, 'I am two years in this school, and there is a lot less involvement with the trust than in other schools that I have been involved in'.

Another added:

> I don't know to what extent the trust knows what's happening on a day-to-day basis. Of course, managers and principals can fill out reports, but I don't know to what extent the finger's on the pulse there. So, from that perspective, I think more could be done.

While teachers of other disciplines at this school level where not asked about training during the quantitative phase of the study, during interview, half indicated that their experience of trustee-led training (both during and beyond initial induction) was limited. For two such participants, input on the school's founding intention formed part of staff induction, while another attended an evening session provided by a group of trustees on the theme of teaching in a voluntary Catholic school. Similar to their RE teacher counterparts, half of this cohort either received no training on ethos or no additional training at all.

Availability of Faith Development Opportunities for Staff

The survey findings show that at primary level, 40 per cent of the combined staff cohorts disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement that 'opportunities for faith development are offered to staff', while the same applied to 29 per cent of staff in the secondary context. A further third (33%) of primary and over a quarter (28%) of secondary staff neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement, while just over a quarter (27%) at primary and 43 per cent at secondary expressed a level of agreement.

As Figure 2.6 shows, it emerged that teachers at primary level were least likely to agree that faith development was open to them, with almost half (49%) either disagreeing or strongly disagreeing that such provision was offered. The same applied to RE teachers at secondary level with 43 per cent of this cohort expressing a level of disagreement.

Figure 2.6 Percentage of primary and secondary staff, by role, who agree or disagree that faith development is offered to them
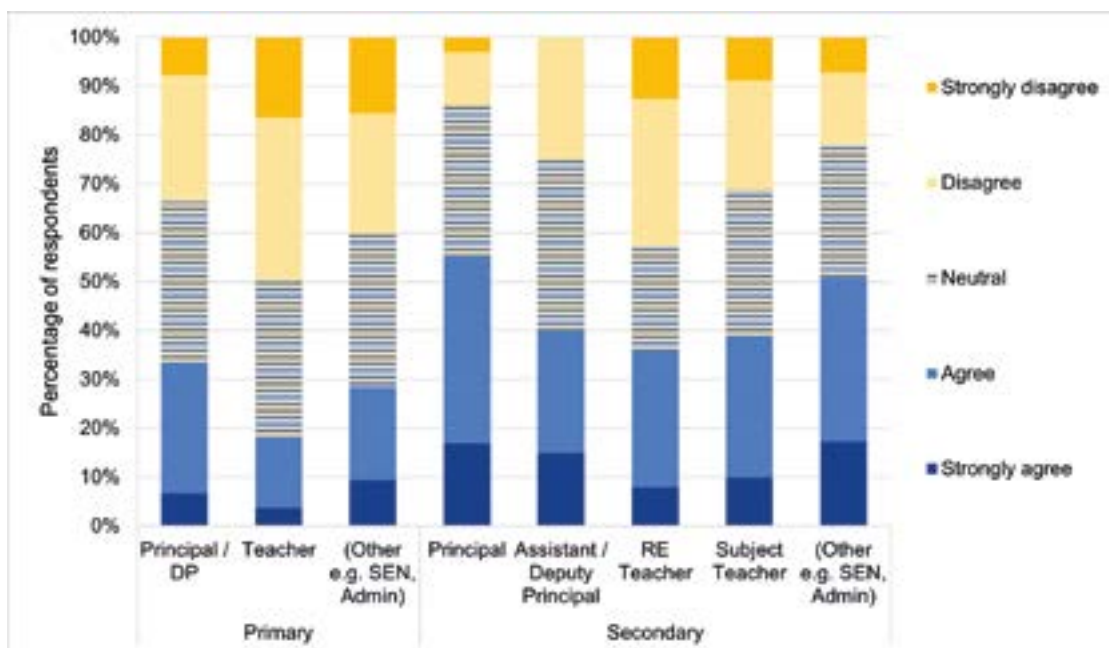
When respondents' perceptions on whether opportunities for faith development are offered to them were analysed by age, no discernible differences were observed at secondary level. However, as the graph below illustrates, at primary level, staff under 29 years were least likely to agree or strongly agree that such provision was made available to them, with just 17 per cent perceiving this to be the case. Agreement among those in the age cohorts under 69 years ranged between 24 and 30 per cent. More than three-quarters (77%) of staff in the 70+ age range expressed majority agreement on the availability of faith development opportunities.

Figure 2.7 Primary staff perceptions on whether opportunities for faith development are offered to them, by age
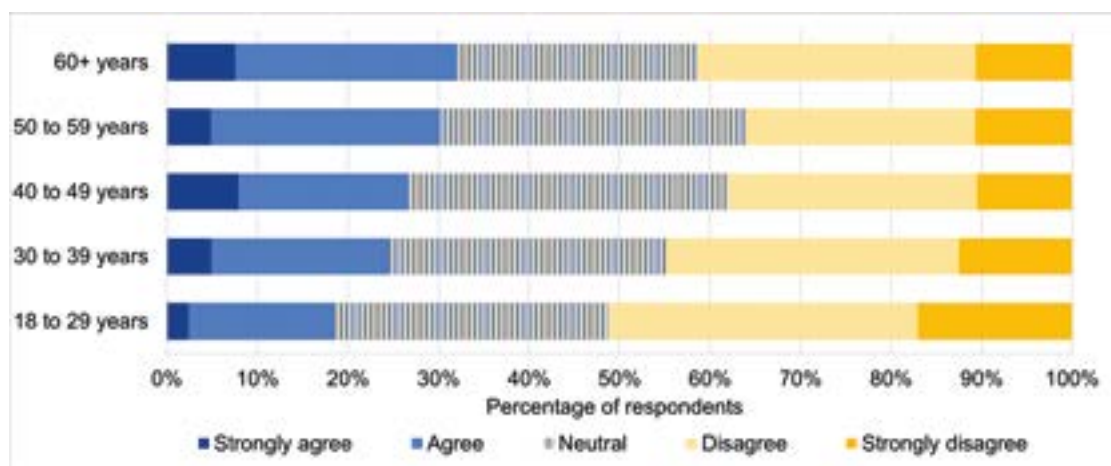
Qualitative Findings on Staff Faith Development
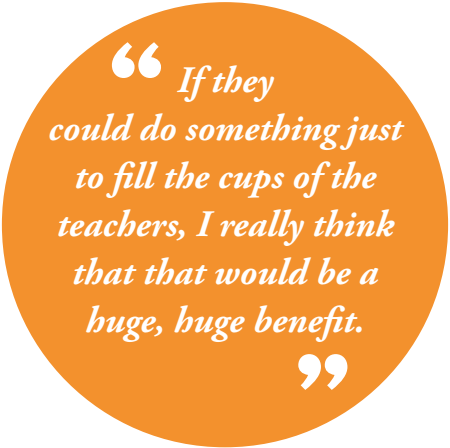
While primary participants were not directly asked to comment on staff faith development provision at interview stage, half of the principal cohort offered observations regarding what they saw as a deficit in this area. One commented on 'very little support coming to us for faith formation, like options of retreats for teachers, but it seems to be our contact from the patron is all about the business of managing the school', while another, speaking specifically about teachers, expressed the opinion that 'they would have had very little input into their faith, probably since their own Confirmation'. The substance of this latter perception was shared by two primary BoM members who spoke of a 'lack of in-depth knowledge of the Catholic faith' and a 'lack of understanding and clarity around the meaning of the Catholic faith' among teachers. On the other hand, a third of the primary teacher cohort did speak of the importance of a relationship with God in their lives, with one recommending that teachers 'need to take time as a staff to understand our Catholic faith and our practices and to discuss and evaluate where we're going'.

At secondary level, again, half of the principal interview cohort outlined how they try to contribute to the faith life of the staff through liturgical celebrations throughout the year, occasional prayers streamed across the intercom to mark specific events, and reflective prayer at the beginning of staff meetings. One of these also spoke of 'making sure our well-being programme has an element of faith in it and … that any big moments throughout the school are marked with reference to our faith'. Nonetheless, another principal expressed reticence around introducing faith development provision, noting that not all teachers identify or practise as Catholics and

> *There has to be a voluntary aspect to it in terms of your staff. I feel we can't round everybody up and say, "right, we're going to develop your faith.*

remarking that 'there has to be a voluntary aspect to it in terms of your staff. I feel we can't round everybody up and say, "right, we're going to develop your faith."'

A member of the teaching staff (who was not an RE teacher) shared the concern that in-service for faith development might not be appropriate or acceptable in a changing, multifaith, multi-belief society and stated, 'I don't know that it would fly well, and not a lot of staff would attend. If it was made compulsory, I think it would put their backs up'.

Conversely, two other staff members (also teachers of subjects other than RE) stated that they would welcome support for their faith life and requested that trustee bodies do more to nourish staff faith development by providing 'resources for the spiritual development of teachers like they do around leadership … if they could do something just to fill the cups of the teachers, I really think that that would be a huge, huge benefit'. This view was endorsed by one secondary board member who suggested that an annual retreat for staff might support their faith life.

> " *If they could do something just to fill the cups of the teachers, I really think that that would be a huge, huge benefit.* "

Quantitative Findings on Awareness of and Familiarity with Irish Episcopal Documents on Catholic Education

This section presents the survey findings in respect of each cohort's awareness of, and familiarity with, the four core ecclesial documents referenced in Section One above.

Respondents were asked the following questions in respect of each document:

- **Have you heard of [name of document]?**
- **To what extent are you familiar with [name of document]'s content?**

- At primary level, three-quarters (75%) of BoM members, almost four in five principals (79%), and the vast majority (89%) of teachers are unsure or say they have not heard of *Vision 08.* At secondary level, 62 per cent of BoM members, a comparable 61 per cent of principals, and 59 per cent of RE teachers state likewise.

- Of those who have heard of *Vision 08* at primary level, over half (51%) of BoM members, 61 per cent of principals, and almost three-quarters (72%) of teachers have little to no familiarity with it. At secondary level, the same applies to over a third (37%) of the BoM cohort, close to half (47%) of principals, and 41 per cent of RE teachers.

Figures 2.8 and 2.9 show levels of awareness of and familiarity with Vision 08 across both school levels.

Figure 2.8 Awareness of Vision 08 at both school levels (by role)
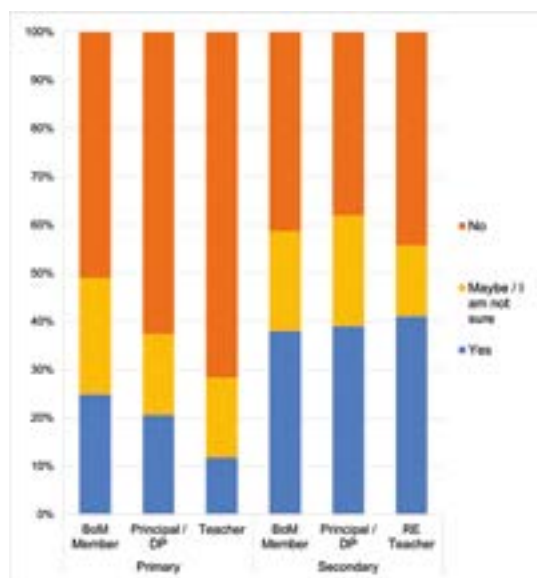
Figure 2.9 Familiarity with Vision 08 at both school levels (by role)
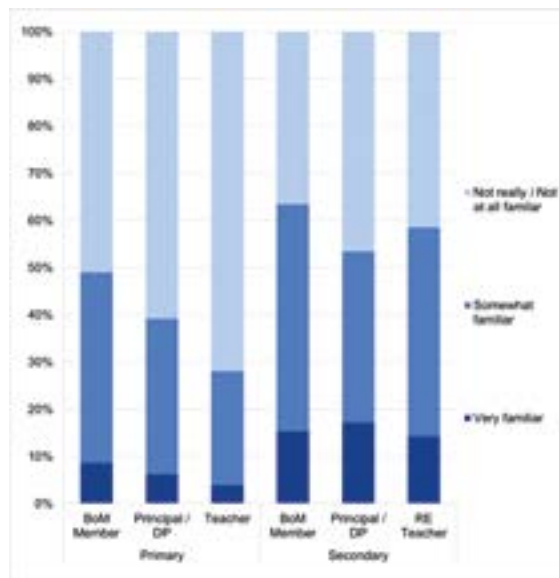
- Over three-quarters (78%) of primary BoM members, 86 per cent of principals, and a similar percentage (87%) of teachers are unsure or state they have not heard of *SGN*. In the secondary context, the same can be said of three-quarters (75%) of BoM members, almost four in five principals (79%), and almost two-thirds (65%) of RE teachers.

- Of those who have heard of *SGN*, half of the primary BoM cohort and approximately two-thirds of principals (65%) and teachers (67%) have little to no familiarity with it. At secondary level, this is also the case for almost half (47%) of the secondary BoM cohort, close to two-thirds (64%) of principals, and 40 per cent of RE teachers.

Figures 2.10 and 2.11 show levels of awareness of and familiarity with *SGN* across both school levels.

*Figure 2.10 Awareness of SGN at both school levels (by role)*
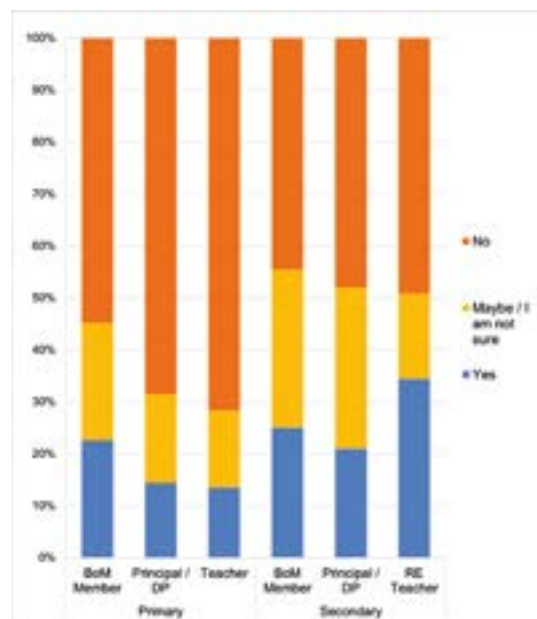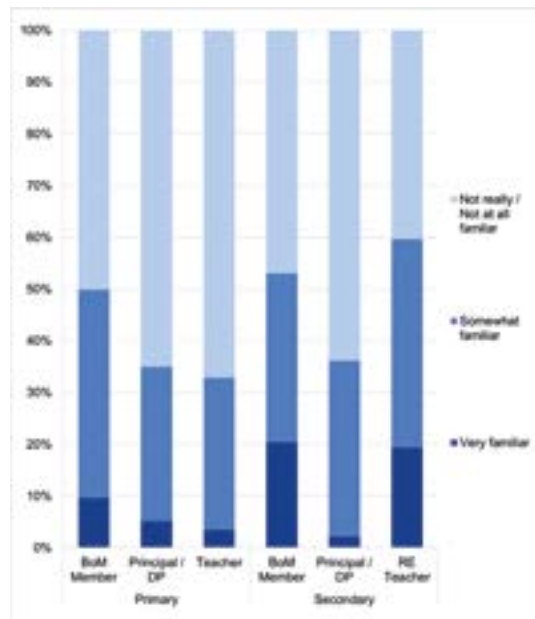

Figure 2.11 Familiarity with SGN at both school levels (by role)

- At primary level, in the region of three-quarters (74%) of BoM members and principals (75%) and 87 per cent of teachers are unsure or report that have not heard of Understanding and living the ethos in a Catholic primary school: a process centred on conversations. In the secondary context, almost half (49%) of BoM members, over a quarter (27%) of principals, and more than half (55%) of RE teachers state similarly.

- Of those who have heard of the document in the primary context, almost half (47%) of BoM members have little to no familiarity with it. The same applies to more than half (53%) of primary principals and close to two-thirds (62%) of teachers. At secondary level, a third of BoM members who have heard of it have little to no familiarity with it. The same can be said of a little over a quarter (26%) of principals and more than a third (36%) of RE teachers.

Figures 2.12 and 2.13 show levels of awareness of and familiarity with Understanding the ethos across both school levels.

Figure 2.12 Awareness of Understanding and living the ethos at both school levels (by role)
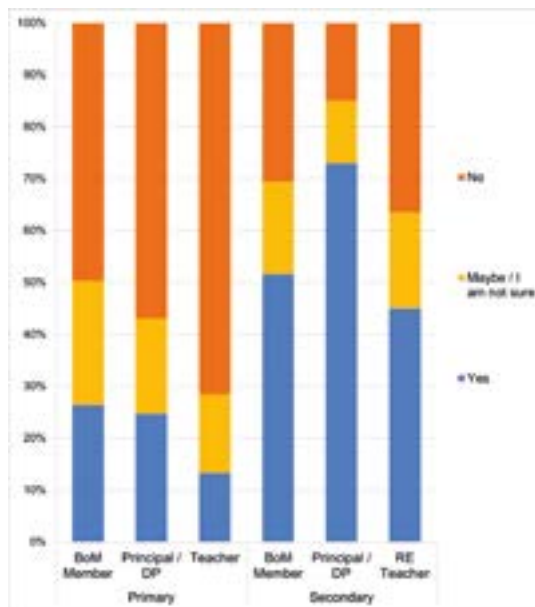
Figure 2.13 Familiarity with Understanding and living the ethos at both school levels (by role)
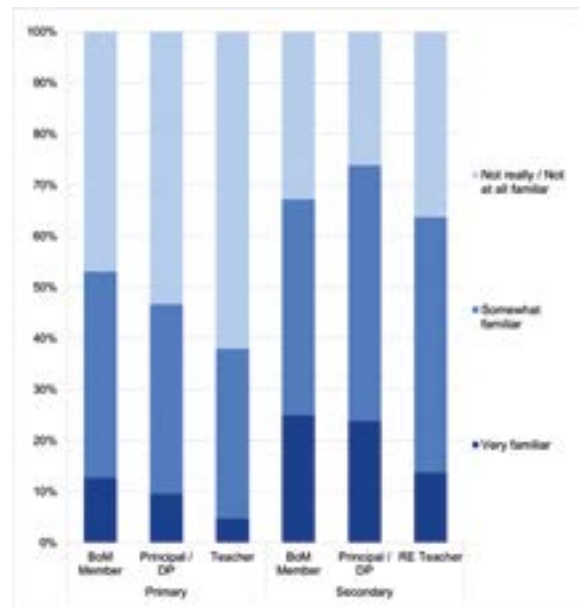
Qualitative Findings on Understandings of Catholic Identity and Ethos

Board of Management Members' Understanding of Catholic Identity and Ethos

The survey and interview findings on initial, ongoing, and ethos-related training – alongside a widespread lack of knowledge of the four IEC documents that pertain to Catholic ethos and identity – prompted questions around the nature of the research cohort's understanding of Catholic identity and ethos. When asked to comment on this at interview, close to half of primary BoM participants linked their understanding to the Golden Rule, with one expressing this as 'based on the teachings of Jesus Christ, love of God, love your neighbour', and another with 'spreading the Good News'. Another characterised their understanding as faith in action: 'it is not just about a prayer space, it's the actions and words on a day-to-day basis'.

One participant who at interview identified as an atheist turned agnostic, voiced their understanding as 'adherence to artefacts and rituals like Holy Communion' and 'some iconography around the school … the calendar is mapped onto the Catholic calendar and there are events in the school.

A secondary BoM participant spoke of their perception as being reflected in the Gospel values that are kept 'at the heart' of all relationships and policies within the school and ensuring that such values are felt in 'the actual atmosphere' of welcome and respect. For two others, applying standards of fairness, justice and forgiveness, and 'taking care of those in need' while confronting attitudes of hypocrisy or greed were also seen as modelling the example of Jesus. Promoting a sense of community and placing an importance on liturgical celebrations and prayer were also emphasised by two secondary board members. Another defined identity as linked to 'promoting the Trustee charter', while one saw it simply as implying a school that is run 'by the Catholic religion or the Catholic body'.

Principals' Understanding of Catholic Identity and Ethos

The majority of primary principals gave articulations that equated Catholic identity and ethos to right relationship with God, oneself and others, modelled on 'the life and death and resurrection of Jesus Christ' and actualised in everyday actions. A participant spoke of 'knowing God and loving God and how all that links together in the work that we do' as central underpinning values. Another emphasised 'bringing the love and forgiveness of God to the children … it's a positive relationship about authentic experiences of spirituality and faith'.

The power that lies in what is done, as much as in what is said, was implied by comments that saw Catholic identity and ethos as focused on 'how to live as a Christian, how to behave and what the right thing to do is in a particular situation'; as 'modelling kindness'; or as advocating being Christian in 'how we talk about others, how we talk about children, how we respond to the needs of those who are most marginalised'. Another stated that 'how you act … is a public expression of a living ethos'. One participant also referred to promoting the schools' founding vision and celebrating the liturgical year as aspects of its identity and ethos, while another remarked on efforts to 'embed the school into the parish and make strong links'.

Five out of six secondary principals who took part at interview had a background in religious education or theology and shared a common understanding of the purpose of Catholic identity. One participant conceptualised it as a striving to ensure that schools 'continue the mission of Christ, bring Gospel values and encourage students and staff to have a living relationship with Jesus Christ'. Another stated 'I don't need the staff to be practising Catholics, but I do need them to know that … Jesus is the person whose values drive what we do here'. Yet another spoke of identity as being expressed both in 'core Gospel values' and in 'our policies, who we are, how we deal with people, how we punctuate the calendar year with the liturgical celebrations'. It was also associated with a sense of care, belonging and community:

I would like the students to be able to come back to school whenever they wanted but also that wherever they live in the world, wherever they choose to do with their lives, whatever community they're part of, to know that they can go to a church or a faith-based organisation at any time and that they understand that they belong there.

Another reinforced this focus on community by speaking of the word 'Catholic' as meaning 'universal':

> We are a Catholic school but we're not just a school for Catholics. We should be places of welcome, and … identity must be rooted in and driven by Gospel values. For me, those values are respect, being just, being inclusive, providing equity, as it's only through providing equity that we can provide equality.

Teachers' Understanding of Catholic Identity and Ethos

A quarter of the primary teacher interview cohort gave understandings reflective of most primary principals' comments. One expressed Catholic identity and ethos as 'taking inspiration from the teachings of Christ' while being 'respectful and inclusive of everyone'. Another gave a holistic understanding, saying 'it's not just academic, it is spiritual, emotional, physical, and all aspects of the human person'. Relational language, involving God and others, was also evident when a participant described ethos as 'how we behave and how we treat each other', also adding, 'we try to include prayer every day'.

Relational and inclusive understandings that were not overtly couched in faith language were also expressed by four cohort participants who linked their understanding to 'equal respect for all creeds and all backgrounds'; to 'being a good person'; or to 'treating others how you would like them to treat you'. The latter participant also noted that such values are foundational to all teaching, and that 'if you were to take the Catholic words out of it, it would be the same as an Educate Together school'.

A third of primary teachers understood

Catholic identity and ethos as patron-driven, and this was reflected in comments such as 'the Catholic Church is the patron of our school. They get to decide the rules and behaviours and culture'.

At secondary level, two RE teachers also saw their school identity as characterised by 'a Christ-centred approach' that reflects the 'Gospel values … of charity, love, faith and hope'. The prioritisation of regular liturgical celebrations such as 'the beginning of year Mass, end of year Mass and any other kind of event like Christmas, November, remembrance Masses, Lent, Easter and … Founder's Day' were all seen as features of a vibrant identity and were emphasised by the majority of this cohort. The building and fostering of a faith community was also mentioned, with one participant remarking that 'we have the luxury of being very much a close community and our Catholic traditions and faith would be very much a part of the school and students would be very involved in that as well'.

Secondary teachers of subjects other than RE characterised Catholic identity as offering 'hope in today's world', or as being Christocentric in 'how the teachers treat students and how we treat each other, even as a staff'. Two of this cohort also recognised school identity as being reflected in liturgies, communal prayer and Catholic Schools' Week, and in the visibility of religious iconography. The founding vision of the school was also noted as part of a participant's understanding when they observed that 'the long heritage has kept the founding intention alive from the 1890s to today', with the ethos of the religious sisters being 'very real and very present'. Another participant also commented on being influenced by their school's Charter and on the values contained therein:

> I want to live my life and exude those values … I want to be seen to model it. And sometimes it's easy to forget that, in the middle of a situation, particularly with conflict or discipline. But that's how I would see it. That's how I see my Catholic identity within my work environment.

No participant, at either school level, referred to any of the four foundational documents outlined above as having influenced their understanding of Catholic identity and ethos.

Section Three

Discussion of Findings

Training deficits point to a gap between what is professed in church documents and what is operational in terms of training provision

The findings in relation to role training across all cohorts raise significant questions about the amount, focus and distribution of training that is being offered by patrons, trusts and their managerial bodies. A lack of training is particularly pronounced at primary level, especially with regard to principals and teachers. This is clear when we consider that while more than two-thirds (68%) of primary BoM members report having received training, less than half (46%) of principals and just 4 in 10 teachers state likewise.

It is apparent that initial training provision is strongest for BoM members at both school levels by comparison with school staff, and it is evident from the BoM manuals produced by the CPSMA at primary level and by the JMB/AMCSS/SSS at secondary level, as well as by the various types of training and support offered by management bodies and referenced above, that relevant resources are indeed targeted to this area. With regard to the primary sector, McGraw and Tiernan (2022) acknowledge the 'herculean task' undertaken by the CPSMA in supporting 'over 25,000 volunteers' on primary boards, as well as the additional guidance on legal and governance issues it provides to chairs of boards and principals through a phone advice service (McGraw and Tiernan 2022, p.92). This recognised, given that BoMs are the delegates of patrons and trustees and, as we have seen, are 'responsible for the development of the school' (*SGN* 2010 p.203) on the latter's behalf, it is appropriate that such support is available and, equally pertinent, that adequate resources are provided to those tasked with delivering it at management/representative body level.

Thus far, we have discussed initial training on, or around, appointment. However, the picture becomes even more stark when the provision of ongoing training from patrons or trusts is considered. With 95 per cent of primary teachers, almost three-quarters of board members at both levels, and a similar percentage of primary principals (74%) reporting that any training they had received was offered on either a once-off or an infrequent basis, it not only paints a worrying picture for schools (particularly at primary level again), it also makes repeated references in the four ecclesial documents to the necessity of ongoing training seem more aspirational than actual.

Even though 40 per cent of principals and more than half of RE teachers (54%) at secondary level report a similar lack of ongoing training, such training levels still indicate an appreciably better-resourced sector. This is also clear when it is recalled that only a little over a quarter (29%) of primary BoM members as opposed to almost half (46%) of their secondary counterparts believe the Catholic ethos was covered to a large extent in any training received, while the same is true of 29 per cent of primary but over 60 per cent (62%) of secondary principals. Interestingly, however, despite quantitative findings revealing that secondary BoM members are afforded more ethos training on a percentage basis than primary, qualitative findings show that a greater emphasis on the need for more of such training came from secondary BoM participants, with the majority (83%) of the latter, as opposed to over half (57%) of the former, calling for more training of this nature.

Conversely, with secondary principals, while some disquiet was expressed about the limited nature of their ethos training in terms of quantity, most calls for a greater emphasis to be placed on ethos came from primary principals during the qualitative research stage, with one memorably commenting, 'we do need instruction because if we don't have the very basics of faith then how are we meant to pass them on?' When it has been recognised elsewhere that 'one of the biggest challenges for both the CPSMA and Catholic schools more broadly is trying to sustain the Catholic ethos' because of a lack of 'significant theological training' on the part of BoMs and principals (McGraw and Tiernan 2022, p.93), and when the obligation of both of the latter to embed and nurture Catholic ethos has been clearly established in the four key church documents, it seems clear that here again there is a gap between the aspirational and the deliverable in the absence of sufficient and appropriate support.

Hitherto, it has been established that training deficits exist at both school levels but that this is especially so at primary level. The reasons why the secondary context fares better with regard to ethos and initial and ongoing training (with the exception of BoM members in the latter regard) are worthy of further scrutiny. The discrepancy is likely influenced by the presence of a greater number of representative and managerial bodies in the secondary space and by the reality of significantly fewer schools in this context. This is not to suggest that all is fully well with regard to training at secondary level, and this is clear from both the quantitative findings previously discussed and the concerns raised by BoM and principal interview participants around a preoccupation during training with governance issues over faith-based considerations. These issues, together with the reported absence of training for half of the secondary teacher cohorts who participated at interview, along with calls for enhanced liturgical training, are all instructive for second level trustee, managerial and representative bodies.

Whatever the total influences on the current realities with regard to training, that the primary sector is markedly under-resourced in this area is abundantly evident from the findings at both phases of the research. This is a matter that will require the urgent attention of the representative bodies such as the CEP and the CPSMA, and especially of the IEC as a whole, and of individual bishops as the majority patrons of these schools.

Paucity of staff faith development reveals a gulf between official rhetoric and lived reality in schools

The high levels of neutrality or disagreement that emerge when discussing whether opportunities for faith development are offered to staff also merit further investigation. If these two measurements are combined, it suggests almost three-quarters (73%) of primary and over half (57%) of secondary staff may not have had such opportunities offered to them. This is noteworthy in its suggestion that faith development is primarily aimed at – and/or availed of – by children and young people. If this is the case, and if faith development is not offered consistently (or at all) as part of training or professional development by all patrons and trusts to those adults whom they charge with the faith development of children, it prompts the question of whether it is availed of elsewhere by these adults. If not, and echoing a primary principal quoted above, what then, is the impact on the quality of faith development being offered to children and young people, and is this being monitored? These findings challenge whether the pre-eminence that should be accorded to adult faith development (also known as adult catechesis) and advocated for in , in both *Understanding and living the ethos* documents, in *The board of management handbook* (CPSMA 2016), and in numerous magisterial documents from *Catechesi Tradendae* (John Paul II 1979, para.43) to the GDC (1997), is also more professed than operational. The findings also resonate with other Irish research in which participants spoke of 'little more than notional assent' (Doherty 2020, p.182) being accorded to adult faith development, despite its official position in post-conciliar documents as 'the primary form of catechesis' (John Paul II 1979, para.43).

Alongside training shortfalls and a failure of foundational documents to connect, care for Catholic identity and ethos is evident in schools

Training shortfalls, and a lack of informed knowledge of the four foundational texts which have informed this research study, raise questions about the specifics of all cohort members' understanding of their own roles and about the specifics of their perception of Catholic identity and ethos. The qualitative findings described in Section Two above have, to a limited degree, illuminated the latter. Nonetheless, these questions remain pertinent in light of additional research findings outlined in Report 3, which show high levels of confidence expressed by both primary and secondary BoM respondents that their boards ensure primary schools are run in accordance with the religious and educational philosophy (ethos) of patrons or trustees, and the same confidence amongst primary teachers that they understand the Catholic ethos of their schools. As Report 5 also demonstrates, they also speak to the extent to which principals are willing or able to fulfil their leadership responsibilities through facilitating specific activities or initiatives which demonstrate their commitment to a vibrant and thriving Catholic identity and ethos in their schools. Some aspects of these findings that are elaborated on in the accompanying reports of this series are worth highlighting below with regard to individual cohorts at both school levels.

The Board of Management's role in nurturing Catholic identity and ethos

Report 3 shows that a sizeable minority of 41 per cent of BoM respondents at primary level are uncertain of or do not have a mission statement based on Gospel values in their schools, while at secondary level the same applies to just 16 per cent of respondents.

The latter report also shows other contrasts with primary and secondary levels with regard to ensuring the implementation of necessary tasks associated with a school being run in accordance

with its Catholic identity and ethos. For example, just over a quarter (27%) of BoM respondents at primary level report that they ensure that their school works with parents to help them understand the school's Catholic ethos. At secondary level, close to two-thirds (63%) of this cohort report carrying out this task.

In terms of ensuring that all teachers employed uphold the ethos of the school, 43 per cent of BoM respondents at primary level, by comparison with 86 per cent at secondary level, state that they adhere to this role responsibility.

Also at primary level, just 30 per cent ensure that new teachers have the opportunity to focus on the Catholic character of the school at induction. Slightly more, at 37 per cent, ensure that their school participates in Catholic Schools' Week. However, at this school level, the remainder – indeed the majority – leave these tasks to the school principal, do not get involved, or, for them, the issue has not arisen.

While delegation of tasks to principals and teachers is legitimate and necessary, the degree and scope of delegation at primary level is unclear. It could be asked, what do those who do directly involve themselves do differently from the two-thirds to three-quarters who do not? And in what other ways do those who delegate to others satisfy themselves that the necessary tasks are being carried out in keeping with the religious and educational philosophy of patrons or trustees? All of this raises the question of whether the nurturing and the protection of ethos are perceived to be more the responsibility of principals and teachers rather than of BoMs after the interview and appointment process is completed. Furthermore, it is worth asking how BoMs ascertain if or how teachers uphold ethos, beyond inquiry at interview stage, when, as is recounted in Report 5, significant numbers at primary level do not directly involve themselves in areas such as the protection of the RE timetable or the following of the RE curriculum and approved textbooks. That issues relating to the Catholic identity of their schools appear, to a large extent, on meeting agendas for under a third (29%) of the primary BoM cohort and 38 per cent of their secondary counterparts adds to the questions already raised around what is actually understood by Catholic identity and whether a common understanding exists within or between those responsible for school leadership. This is particularly important to query when we recall that just over a quarter (29%) of primary and less than half (46%) of secondary BoM members stated that Catholic ethos was prominent in their training.

What seems clear from the foregoing is that there may be some disparity between the professed belief of over two-thirds of the primary BoM cohort that their schools are run in accordance with a Catholic ethos to a large extent, and the operational reality which indicates somewhat lower levels of priority. Whether this apparent disparity is influenced by a lack of clarity about the parameters or level of responsibility of their role – perhaps influenced by the dearth of training that has emerged – is not fully clear and requires further examination.

The principal's role in nurturing Catholic identity and ethos

When it is considered that the vast majority of principals across both school levels confirm that their schools have mission statements based on Catholic values, that care for others is championed, that the moral development of pupils in light of Catholic principles is fostered, and that providing opportunities for students to develop a personal faith in Jesus Christ is a central educational aim, these findings offer reassurance about healthy levels of observance among principals with regard to these and other aspects of Catholic identity and ethos (see Report 3).

The findings of this latter report also offer encouragement that Catholic Schools' Week is accorded priority among the large majority (85%) of primary principals (this question was not asked of secondary principals) and that attention is also paid by the majority of this cohort at both levels to ensuring that parents have an informed view of what is implied by a Catholic ethos. All this rightly acknowledged, the findings also raise important questions around what allows a considerably higher percentage of secondary principals (86%) as compared with 67 per cent at primary level to devote attention to introducing parents to their school's ethos.

Further, as highlighted above, what perceptions of Catholic ethos are being articulated between principals, parents, teachers, management and patrons? Is there a common understanding and how is this ascertained?

These questions are especially relevant in light of the findings on training and on the low levels of strong familiarity with key identity- and ethos-related documents. As outlined in Report 3, they are also pertinent given that a significant minority (41%) of principals at primary level and just shy of half (47%) at secondary level report that their patrons/trustees do not hold them accountable, to a large extent, for the implementation of the Catholic identity of their schools. When this is placed alongside the knowledge that a quarter of primary and almost a third (32%) of secondary principals place a large emphasis on the ongoing discussion of Catholic identity at BoM level, it again calls into question the degree to which core stakeholder understandings are articulated, monitored and benchmarked against the school's animating mission statement and the guiding episcopal documents previously mentioned.

The teacher's role in nurturing Catholic identity and ethos

In tandem with principals, Report 3 shows that the majority of all teachers at primary and secondary level confirm that their schools have mission statements based on Catholic values, that they champion care for others, and that they actively promote the moral development of pupils in light of Catholic principles. Again, these findings offer some reassurance around reasonably encouraging levels of awareness and adherence among teachers to important aspects of Catholic identity and ethos. This recognised, it must also be noted that significantly fewer teachers than principals at both school levels agreed about the prevalence surrounding the moral development of pupils, and the same applied when teachers at both levels were asked whether providing opportunities for students to develop a personal faith in Jesus Christ is a central educational aim of their schools.

Nevertheless, it can be acknowledged that more than three-quarters (77%) of primary and over two-thirds (66%) of secondary teachers (of subjects other than RE) report that they respect the Catholic ethos of their schools to a large extent. However, at both school levels these same cohorts are less likely to state that they largely witness to this ethos – close to two-thirds (62%) at primary and over half (57%) at secondary.

These findings also raise a number of salient questions including:

i.   What influences the considerable divergence in perception between principals and teachers with regard to the two important aspects of Catholic identity and ethos highlighted above (moral development and the opportunity for pupils to develop a personal faith in Jesus Christ)?

ii. What are the factors that prevent between more than a fifth (22%) of primary and over a third (34%) of teachers with specialisms outside of RE from fully respecting the Catholic ethos of their schools? The same question applies when we consider that just under 4 in 10 (39%) at primary level and slightly over the same proportion (44%) at secondary level report that they witness to their school's ethos to less than large extents.

iii. Finally, as previously noted with regard to BoM members and principals, is the question of whether a common understanding of Catholic identity and ethos is shared between teachers and their fellow stakeholders in Catholic education and how this can be evaluated in the apparent absence of widespread participation in the processes outlined in *Understanding and living the ethos* at both school levels. This question, as it applies to all stakeholders, is worthy of further research.

To conclude this discussion of research findings, we turn now to the consider findings from the qualitative phase of the research. While it is acknowledged and emphasised that the findings from this stage are not open to general application, they are, nonetheless, capable of shedding some light on how cohort participants express their understandings of Catholic identity and ethos.

It is evident from the phase 2 findings that there are clear resonances with the hallmarks of a Catholic school that are laid out in varying language, and with different emphases, in all four ecclesial documents. Such findings give us partial but nonetheless important insights into whether shared understanding exists among and between school stakeholders.

Participants from every cohort across both school levels spoke of their schools being animated by the person of Jesus Christ and the practice of Gospel values which were understood at primary BoM level as faith in action. Participants of the same role cohort at secondary level concretised such action as a commitment to welcome, respect, fairness, justice and care for others, while a member of the secondary RE teacher cohort expressed them as 'charity, love, faith and hope'.

For participants in all cohorts, the school's role in fostering right relationship is a central theme. Members of the primary BoM and primary principal level cohorts specifically mentioned the responsibility of helping pupils to develop a positive relationship with God through introducing the 'love and mercy of God to children' and fostering 'authentic experiences of spirituality and faith'. An awareness of the importance of nurturing caring relationships with others was also emphasised strongly by all cohorts and can be synthesised in the comment that 'how you act … is a public expression of a living ethos'. The importance of embedding their expressed values in school polices was stressed at secondary level by members of the BoM, principal and staff cohorts, while their school's founding vision was also seen as a key underpinning of Catholic identity by a primary principal and secondary staff cohort member.

The marking of the liturgical celebration and prayer were also identified as key aspects of their understanding by all cohorts, with particular emphasis on this coming from the majority in the secondary RE teachers' cohort. Creating a sense of belonging and community within the school and beyond were also recognised important aspects at secondary level by members of the BoM, principal and RE teacher cohorts, and at primary level by a principal participant. An awareness of the need for inclusion and 'equal respect for all creeds and all backgrounds' was also identified by primary teachers.

Although, as mentioned, no primary or secondary participants referred to any of the four foundational documents when speaking of their understanding of Catholic identity and ethos, it can be seen from the above summary that in certain important aspects, and admittedly to varying degrees, their remarks coalesce with the majority of key features of a Catholic school as expressed in the executive summary of *Vision 08* (ICBC 2008a, p.145). While these qualitative findings do not permit an evaluation of the extent to which similar understandings are replicated across the broad population of board members or staff in Catholic schools in Ireland, what can be said is that there is some evidence in this qualitative sample of 52 cross-cohort stakeholders of an alignment in outlook between official church policy and operational understanding at school level. As discussed above, this conclusion is both supported and challenged, in certain areas, by the quantitative findings.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This report has set out the vision of four Irish ecclesial documents with regard to the training and adult faith development needed to equip Catholic school personnel for their roles in fostering Catholic identity and ethos. It has brought the expectations and aspirations of these documents, and those of other pertinent publications, into dialogue with the perceptions and experiences of school BoM and staff members. In light of this, and of the foregoing analysis and discussion of findings, along with the suggestions for further research already highlighted, the following recommendations are put forward:

- To build on the positive findings and to mitigate the challenges that have also been identified, there is an urgent need for increased resources to be allocated by patrons and trusts to both introductory and ongoing training/CPD for all school personnel, particularly with regard to identity and ethos. As noted, this recommendation echoes similar calls for support made in the Genesis Report (CPSMA/CSP/AMCSS 2019, p.59). These additional resources are required across both school levels, with the need particularly acute at primary level, especially among principals and teachers. To inform the allocation of extra resources, it is recommended that an in-depth evaluation of training provision – including quality, quantity and accountability – take place at both school levels.

- As outlined in the Overview to this series and alluded to in Section 1 above, the structure of Catholic education in Ireland involves a range of diocesan education offices, managerial and representative organisations, and trust bodies, all of whom hold some responsibility for training. In order to avoid possible duplication or overconcentration on particular areas of training (such as governance over school ethos), it seems clear from the research findings that more clarity is needed around the parameters of responsibility (that is, who does what, when, where, why and how?), and around the feasibility for delivery (that is, to what degree are the varying bodies able to meet the demand that exists?). In particular, it is notable that more organisations exist to support training at secondary level than at primary level, which is by far the larger sector. Given the reported inadequacy of training provision, particularly at primary level, what appears to be an imbalanced distribution of support is an issue that merits greater attention.

- As well as at national level, there is a need for more clarity around the parameters of responsibility around the provision of training at school level too. Official policy indicates that it is a shared responsibility between patrons/trust, BoMs, the school principal and individual initiative. Chief responsibility lies with patrons and trusts and their BoM delegates who, in turn, devolve operational responsibility to principals. In this scenario, where everyone has some responsibility, unless it is crystal clear which aspects of overall training policy and delivery are to be overseen, monitored and evaluated, and by whom, there is the risk that everyone's responsibility becomes no one's responsibility in the assumption that someone else is taking care of it. This, then, is also recommended as an area that requires further examination by all stakeholders.

- The quality and quantity of patron/trust training for teachers at both levels in delivering the RE curriculum also merits some consideration. While those who received such training reported generally positively regarding its usefulness, this was slightly more the case at secondary level than at primary level, with fairly small percentages at both levels awarding top marks in terms of efficacy.

- When it is considered that 40 per cent of staff at primary level disagreed or strongly disagreed that faith development opportunities are offered to them, and the same applied to 29 per cent of staff in the secondary context, it is clear that this is a further area that does not appear to be receiving the priority accorded to it in ecclesial documents. While this affects both school levels, it is especially acute at primary level among those who are under the age of forty. It is therefore recommended that adult faith development receives much greater attention by patrons/trusts and their representative and managerial bodies.

- This report has established a general lack of knowledge regarding the four ecclesial documents that inform both Irish Catholic education and this research study. Despite the familiarity deficit, the research findings offer some reassurance that, in spite of the gaps highlighted in this and accompanying reports, there is still evidence of a nurturing of Catholic identity and ethos in schools which correlates with official expectations. Nonetheless, that such a lack of awareness regarding the content of these documents persists, raises questions about the effectiveness of their dissemination and of the practicality of their being utilised in schools. Consequently, further investigation into both of these questions is warranted and recommended.

- A further area for consideration is the variety of language, emphases, targets and indicators of achievement presented in the ecclesial documents – and in other support handbooks from managerial and representative bodies – to convey comparable understandings of Catholic identity and ethos. While these documents are largely equivalent and there are no contradictions between them, it is suggested that arriving at an economy of terminology about what is core to Catholic identity and ethos might assist understanding of these concepts and of how they can be embodied in schools. A related point is the interchangeability of language that occurs when discussing areas such as faith development as 'spiritual development' or 'faith formation' or 'catechesis'. Pertinent examples occur in *Understanding and living the ethos* at primary level when the CSP details one of its organisational aims as being to 'support Catholic educators in the core activities of learning and teaching in order to foster high quality lifelong learning and faith development for all learners' (2019, p.7). No further mentions are made of faith

development in this document. However, 'the spiritual development of pupils' (CSP 2019, p.16. p.19, p.62) is emphasised as a central educational aim, and 'faith formation' (CSP 2019, p.19. p.59) is recognised as an integral component of the RE programme. Its sister document for second level also emphasises the centrality of 'the spiritual development' and 'faith formation' of students (CSP 2016a, p.30), and it stresses the importance of 'faith development, for the Board of Management, students, staff and parents' (CSP 2016a, p.31). Though it is not uncommon for such terminology to be used synonymously, it has been observed elsewhere that when 'a certain fluidity exists in the use of terms' (Renehan and Williams 2015, p.76; Horrell 2018, p.7; Cullen 2013, p.6; Cunnane 2000, p.2), it can lead to 'a lack of definitional consensus' (Doherty 2020, p.38), which may hinder clarity and understanding.

- The foregoing observations and recommendations are relevant here given the suggestion made by a primary BoM member that providing documentation may, in some instances, be considered the equivalent of in-person training provision by patrons, trusts and their representatives, particularly with regard to identity and ethos. This is also implied in the attention given to these concepts in the four ecclesial documents and in the BoM publications from both the CPSMA and the JMB/AMCSS. However, in light of the research findings, and if the websites of the latter two organisations are also indicators of provision, it could be concluded that disproportionate attention is given to face-to-face governance training compared with identity and ethos training which may be more reliant on reading and information materials, chiefly directed at BoMs and/or principals. It is therefore recommended that, if they are envisaged as fundamental training mechanisms, more attention is brought to bear on how official documents from patrons/trustees, and support publications from managerial and representative bodies, can be appropriated in ways that are meaningful and practical to those in schools with the task of actualising the richness of the philosophy contained within them.

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