Catholic schools exist within the Church and society to provide quality Catholic schooling, a 'synthesis of faith and culture' which sees each student grow to his or her full human and spiritual potential. The work of the school is learning, and the Catholic School supports the work of the Church as an agent of learning. The work of the Church, the development of the individual and the good of society, are promoted within a Quality Catholic School through improving learning outcomes. These learning outcomes include learning the Faith, responding to the invitation to Faith within a relationship with Jesus Christ, learning to know themselves and the persons they are created to be, learning the formal curriculum, and learning the interpersonal, intrapersonal and other skills that are necessary to be a contributing member of society and a faithful disciple of Christ.

There are five essential marks of a Catholic School:

1. **It is inspired by a supernatural vision.** A Catholic experience of learning and teaching is the lived expression, celebration and response to the love of the risen Jesus. Learning and teaching which is characterised by the search for truth and wisdom is enlivened by the presence of the Spirit within each person.

2. **It is founded on a Christian view of what it is to be human.** The dignity of the human person is a central pillar of Catholicity. Therefore, learning needs to be rich, real and relevant. The role of dialogue and being present to the other is central to the Catholic dimension of learning and teaching and the building of new and deeper understandings.

3. **It is animated by communion, and is itself a real community.** Teaching in our Catholic schools is inclusive, acknowledges and builds on the strengths of the learner and honours diversity. In so doing we ensure ‘young men and women of character and faith whose individual gifts are nurtured to their highest potential’ so that they can contribute effectively to Church, society and culture. In this context it becomes especially urgent to offer young people a course of scholastic formation which is not reduced to a simple individualistic and instrumental fruition of service with a view to obtaining a qualification. As well as gaining knowledge students must also have a strong experience of sharing with their educators. For this experience to be happily accomplished, educators must be welcoming and well-prepared interlocutors, able to awaken and direct the best energies of students towards the search for truth and the meaning of existence, a positive construction of themselves and of life in view of an overall formation. In the end, real education is not possible without the light of truth.

4. **A Catholic worldview is imbued throughout its curriculum.** Our Catholic worldview is the context within which we live, learn and teach. We approach learning and teaching in our schools with a Catholic imagination and a particular hope-filled view of the human person.

5. **It is sustained by witness to the Gospel.** When ‘learning is the work’ in our Catholic schools we witness to Christ’s presence in our lives and experience the reciprocal invitation to participation in the life of Christ. In this way we build the narrative of Catholicity in practice, in our schools. This is the core of our Catholic Education Framework.

**Quality Catholic schooling: our core moral purpose**

When ‘learning is the work’ in our Catholic schools ‘it awaken(s) and direct(s) the best energies of students towards the search for truth and the meaning of existence, a positive construction of themselves and of life in view of an overall formation’.

**Learning:**

1. occurs in the learner’s context. It builds on what learners know and what they believe about themselves. It is essentially relational, and occurs in particular social and cultural contexts. Learners’ pre-existing knowledge frames their assumptions and explanations in their search for meaning. 21st Century learners live within a technologically-enhanced, information-rich context.

2. is an active, lifelong and interactive process of making connections with what is currently known, and organising new learning around important concepts producing deep knowledge and deep understanding. The connections that are made are between theory and information, between self and other, between formal curricula and real life experiences.

3. requires metacognition, which is the process of self-monitoring and reflection about what and how we learn.

This allows transfer and application to new contexts, and the recognition of the limits of one’s current learning. Metacognition is engaged and enhanced when learners teach others what they are learning. Assessment-for-learning works by driving metacognitive processes.
About teaching

The purpose of teaching is to enable great learning. Teaching as an art and a science involves who the teacher is and what the teacher does. In a Catholic school, ‘teachers, as witnesses, account for the hope that nourishes their own lives by living the truth they propose to their pupils’. Teaching is based in the quality of the relationship between teacher and student, and the teacher’s passion for what is taught. It involves intuition and builds on the teacher’s sense of self. Teaching involves understanding learning, strong content knowledge and strong pedagogical content knowledge.

Effective teaching:
1. begins from the learner’s context and personalises the learning process to meet the learners’ needs. It acknowledges the need for a safe and supportive environment. It matches learning experiences with emerging needs, puts challenging but achievable expectations in front of students and recognises both the world in which young people live and the capabilities for learning that this brings. It utilises student voice as a means of understanding the learners’ context.
2. identifies the different ways in which students make connections between elements of learning, make sense of new learnings, and encourages students to take risks and learn from them. It sees the learner as active in the construction of knowledge, providing both depth and breadth in exploration of learning. It provides feedback to the learner on their learning such that the learner is engaged with the next step on the learning journey.
3. is a metacognitive activity, and results in the teacher’s reflection on his/her own learning through teaching. Great teachers have high expectations of themselves, and are always engaged in reflection on ways to improve learning. Teachers engage learners’ metacognition with high-quality feedback on their learning and by providing them with opportunities to teach others. Teaching is made more powerful by reflection on data and appropriate action on the data.

About teacher-learning

‘Teacher-learning’ is the essential means by which teachers develop their professional practice and improve learning for students. Teachers-who-learn never teach the same lesson twice, but reflects on practice and theory to develop what they do. Teachers-who-learn move through identifiable stages of development from novice to expert. In a Catholic school ‘it is not, therefore, sufficient to achieve solely an initial good level of preparation; rather what is required is to maintain it and elevate it in a journey of permanent formation.’

Effective teacher-learning:
1. addresses the context by addressing teachers’ differing needs, meeting teachers at their particular stage of the professional journey, and building on strengths. Effective teacher-learning engages a variety of processes and allows for choice by teachers. Processes for teacher-learning as individuals or in groups include critical collaboration, mentoring, coaching, de-privatising practice, use of 21st-century learning tools and individual inquiry. It generally is most effective within the teacher’s own school context, enabling a focus on the particular needs of this group of students, alignment with this school’s goals and collaboration with these colleagues in a professional learning community.
2. is based on connections between well-founded theory and the teacher’s own practice. It uses research rather than opinion or fashion, addresses questions with appropriate tools such as action research and uses appropriate technology for deep, rich learning. It enables teachers to develop and communicate a well-founded interpretation of the students’ needs and their learning. It deepens content knowledge, pedagogical knowledge and/or pedagogical content knowledge and in doing this develops for the professional learning community a common language of learning.
3. enables the teacher to reflect on his/her own teaching in a metacognitive way. The teacher identifies his/her own learning needs from consideration of the students’ learning needs and learns from evaluation of the impact of his/her own practice. Data are used to frame questions rather than to make judgments. ‘Data’ includes but is not limited to timely, constructive feedback, learning conversations, structured reflection, student voice and quantitative data.

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