



**WELCOME!**

# **THE DISTINCTIVE CURRICULUM OF CATHOLIC SCHOOLS**



**WHAT MAKES IT DISTINCTIVE?**

# Aims of this session . . .



- To consider the Catholic school curriculum in the light of the current national debate on the shape and purpose of the curriculum
- To review the NBRIA 'Distinctive Curriculum of the Catholic School' document [2012]
- To examine the features of the Catholic school curriculum that makes it distinctive
- To discuss how we, as governors, might ensure and develop the distinctive Catholic curriculum of our own schools.

# QCA driving questions for curriculum design, development and implementation



- What are we trying to achieve?
- How do we organize learning?
- How well are we achieving our aims?

# QCA 2009



*The curriculum should be treasured. There should be a real national pride in our curriculum: the learning that the nation has decided to set before its young.*

*Teachers, parents, employers, the media and the public should all see the curriculum as something to embrace, support and celebrate. Most of all, young people should relish the opportunity for discovery and achievement that the curriculum offers'*



## For discussion ...



- What do you see as the DfE priorities in the development of the curriculum?
- What issues/challenges does this present in your Catholic school?

# Archbishop Nichols 2009



*'Today we live in a society that tends to instrumentalise everything. In other words, everything is broken down to clear objectives and attainment and each is given a price. Once this really takes hold then education has entered the market place. We [Catholic schools] are finding ourselves considered as nothing more than consumers and suppliers.'*

*'One of the key callings of a Catholic school in education today is to be an arena of genuine covenantal cooperation for the common good. This is one of the reasons why our schools are a genuine service today'*



## For discussion ...



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# The vision of Catholic education



*The task of education requires ‘a synthesis of culture and faith, and a synthesis of faith and life; the first is reached by integrating all the different aspects of human knowledge through the subjects taught, in the light of the Gospel; the second in the growth of the virtues characteristic of the Christian.’*

‘The Catholic school’, Congregation for Catholic Education, Rome 1977)

# Philosophy of Catholic education



- Catholic vision of education is distinctive
- Its values, beliefs, aspirations must inspire the whole curriculum
- Ethos of the school vs. external values and influences
- Need to have a clear overview and consider what makes an authentic learning environment

# The Church's theology of education



- Starting point: the belief in the human person created by God and offered the fullness of life
- Ideally a belief shared by the whole school community
- Education requires an ongoing engagement between faith and learning



# Philosophy of education in our school



- Does your whole school curriculum promote care and respect for self, others and God creation?
- Does your curriculum contribute to integral, spiritual and moral development?
- How does your school integrate into the curriculum pastoral care for all pupils with a special regard for the vulnerable and those of other faiths?
- How does your school welcome and include people with learning disabilities?

# Context for learning: a community of faith



- The Catholic school as a faith community
- Community as a place of belonging, growth, service
- Community experience as part of the learning experience
- Witness dimension: the Catholic community educates for communion
- Fertile environment for human growth

# The role of the 'Educator'



- Parents are the first educators of their children.
- Teachers are held in special esteem:  
*'teaching is a noble calling and profession'*
- Teachers convey their understanding of life and the human person
- Teachers as role models
- Teachers write *'on the very spirit of human beings'*  
(The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium, Rome 1988)

# Catholic schools and standards



- Canonical requirement for excellence
- Striving for excellence as a Christian pursuit
- High achievement and growth for everyone

## **BUT ...**

- The 'drive for outcomes can leave little room to pause to connect, to still or to deepen': importance of opportunities for reflection

# Teaching and learning seen through faith



- The Catholic curriculum like other curricula has its own perspectives and values
- Faith-based schools offer their own particular and outlook and beliefs which give perspective to teaching and learning
- The drive for outcomes can leave little room to pause to connect, to still or to deepen': importance of opportunities for reflection

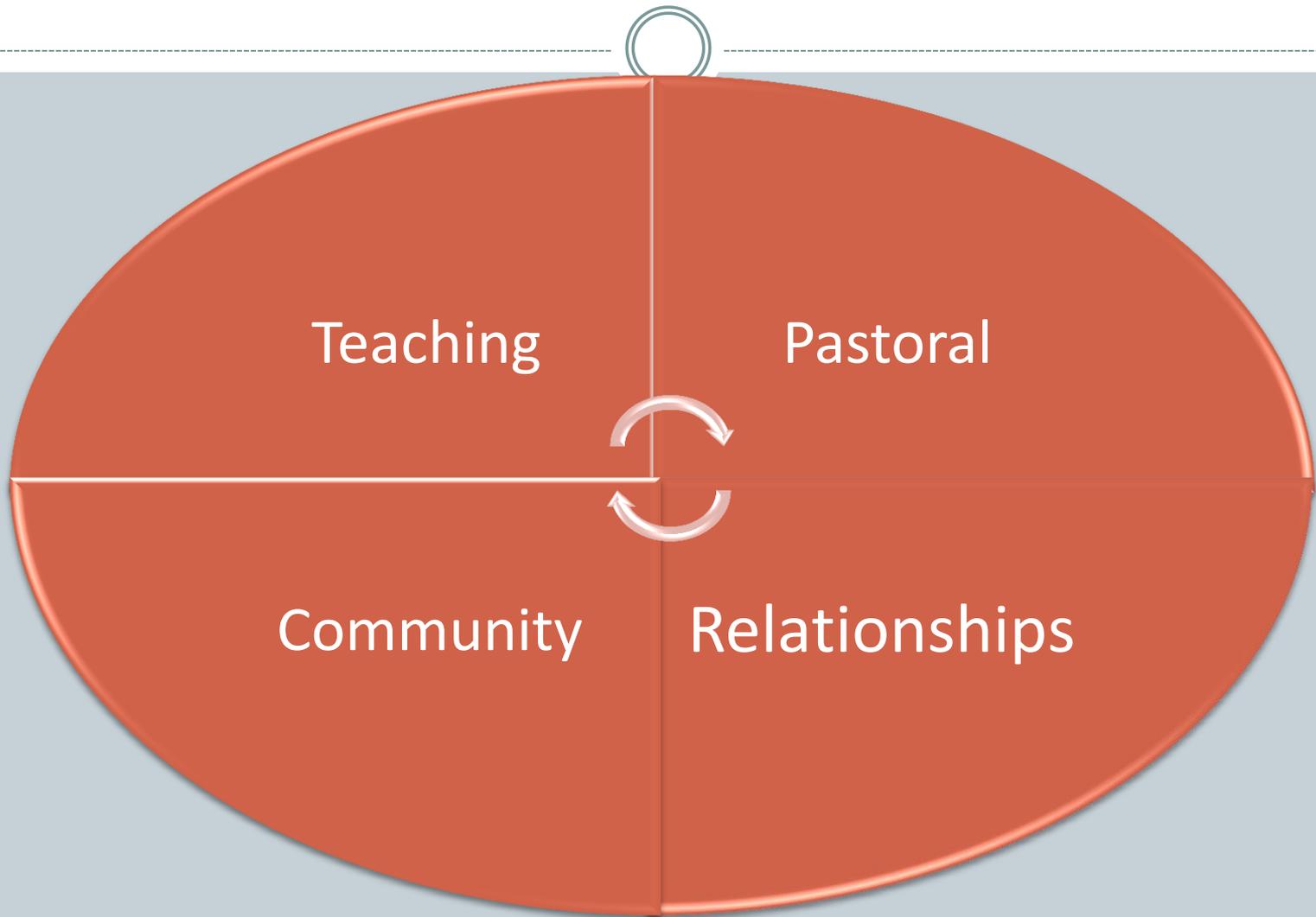


## For discussion ...



- The curriculum reflects the distinctive values and history of the Catholic community
- Learning experiences promote good relationships
- Achievement for all

# The distinctive elements





# Consider the four elements of the curriculum



- What are your strengths in each of 4 elements?
- Are there any elements that need more attention?
- What strategies can you use to address this?
- How will you measure and celebrate success?

# Religious Education



- R.E. is the foundation of the entire educational process
- It is a core subject of the curriculum
- Religious literacy, understanding, spiritual and moral competence
- Tools and skills to explore deeper questions

# Reviewing and planning the curriculum



- Specific aims of every subject/cross curricular
- Understanding of how every subject contributes to the mission and values of the school
- Conversation within the school
- Collaborative planning
- The desired curriculum drives decisions about staffing and resources



# The distinctive curriculum in *your* school



*In your school ...*

- How are decisions made about the curriculum?
- What principles underpin the decision making?
- From where does the school find its guidance on the curriculum?
- How can you as governors ensure and develop the distinctive Catholic curriculum of your own school?

# Archbishop Nichols 2009



*‘Knowing Christ gives rise to a way of life which we believe fosters true virtue, true, steady life-building habits of mind and action. That’s what virtue is. It’s those habits of mind and action, which genuinely serve the common good, like honesty and justice and compassion and courage and prudence and temperance: that ability to moderate and use all things with good judgement. There are plenty of indicators in our society today that we need such civic virtues in addition to regulation.*

*Schools are the places where such virtue is generated or where it is neglected. It will know not just the **how** but the **why**. In other words a good school will have a coherent moral discourse: it will be able to present not just its codes of conduct, but also its moral reasoning. I would trust that a Catholic school is certainly able to do this. It should be known not for just **where** we stand, but **why**.’*