Admissions to Catholic Schools and the Certificate of Catholic Practice

Introduction

The Diocesan Education Service has updated its model Admission Policies to bring it in line with the National Catholic Education Service and to ensure compliance with the mandatory School Admission Code which all Admission Authorities are legally required to follow.

Our schools will still prioritise Catholic applicants and a certificate of Baptism will still be used to identify this. However, in cases where a school is oversubscribed with Catholic applicants, it will be necessary to rank further the Catholic applicants, and the Certificate of Catholic Practice will be used to do this.

The Certificate of Catholic Practice

The Certificate of Catholic Practice is based on the following principles:

· There is to be a single, objective, test for Catholic Practice: whether the child comes from a practising Catholic family.

· It is for a priest to make the judgment whether a child comes from a practising Catholic family.

· The priest should have enough information to allow him to build up a complete picture of the family and its circumstances in order to exercise such judgment.

· This guidance sets out the definition of 'practising Catholic' for the purposes of the Certificate of Catholic Practice only and for no other purpose.

· The test for Catholic practice:

o is capable of being applied consistently by many different priests;

o and is susceptible to proof by reasonable evidence based on observation.

· A Catholic child from a practising Catholic family is entitled to a Certificate of Catholic Practice.

The test is based upon Mass attendance, as this is capable of being observed objectively, with a reasonable degree of accuracy. Therefore, for the purposes of the Certificate of Catholic Practice, a person is a practising Catholic if they observe the Church's precepti of attending Mass on Sundays and holy days of obligation.

Length of Catholic Practice

Priests cannot judge whether a person's pattern of attendance at Mass corresponds to that required by the Church unless attendance has continued for a substantial period of time. This should always be presumed if the required pattern of attendance has continued for two years or more (or the whole time required by the Church, where this is shorter).

Conclusion

Families should regard the change as a reminder of the need to be engaged with the life of the local Church, that is, the parish – not simply because they desire a school place for their child but because it is first and foremost their faith community, because worshipping God and being fed by Christ in word and Sacrament is what we are about and because, as the Children of God families want their children to be supported in their journey of faith.

All clergy are committed to supporting parishioners in the difficult task of parenting and the joyful task of sharing faith and are not oblivious to the challenges that families face. Please be kind enough to trust your clergy - but please don't put them in the awkward

position of being asked to provide a certificate for someone they have hardly ever seen before.

i For reference, please see Catechism of the Catholic Church, paragraphs 2041 – 2042 Catechism of the Catholic Church.) The precise nature of this obligation is set out in the Church's Canon Law: canons 1246 – 1248 Code of Canon Law - Book IV - Function of the Church (Cann. 1244-1253). For members of Eastern Catholic Churches the equivalent canon is Canon 881 of the 1990 Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches.