



*Reflection Guides on School Ethos
For Primary Schools under Church
of Ireland Patronage*



Why do we need to reflect on school ethos?

The involvement of the Church of Ireland stretches back over many centuries. The values and beliefs of the Church of Ireland are deeply embedded in the community of the church and the school is one practical expression of the mission of the church both to its own members, but also to all the community. Yet, this long history and witness is not enough to ensure that the life of the community of the school lives out the Anglican ethos of the school. Ethos is interactive and active. It should be inclusive not exclusive. It should guide the daily life of the school. The ethos of the school should nourish the life the school and be nourished by all who are members of the community of the school. The ethos of the school, if it is to be an authentic expression of Christian witness, should be a living experience for all who learn, teach and work in the school. The ethos of a Church of Ireland primary school is therefore reflexive and shaped by experience, while also being based on a consistent bedrock of faith in the Anglican tradition.

Using the Reflection Guides

The two Reflection Guides are intended as a framework, designed to assist boards of management of Church of Ireland schools to reflect on their school ethos through the Five Marks of Mission and Scripture.

They are not intended to be either prescriptive or exhaustive, but rather, to lead and prompt reflection and discussion. This reflection is a resource for boards of management to locate the work of the board and the school in an authentically Anglican framework and, in doing so, give life and expression to the Church of Ireland ethos of the school.

The first Reflection Guide uses the Five Marks of Mission of the Anglican Communion and is designed to be used at a Board meeting to assist board members in reflection on their work on the Board and to locate it within a Christian and Anglican context.

The second Reflection Guide builds on the first and moves the reflection into a reflection guided and based on scripture. This Reflection Guide may suit boards where members wish to engage in a deeper scripturally referenced reflection on the ethos of the school.

Exploring our Church of Ireland school ethos through The Five 'Marks of Mission'

The Five Marks of Mission of the Anglican Communion

The Five Marks of Mission are an important statement on mission. They express the Anglican Communion's common commitment to, and understanding of, God's holistic and integral mission. The mission of the Church is the mission of Christ.

The Five Marks of Mission are:

1. Tell - To proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom
2. Teach - To teach, baptise and nurture new believers
3. Tend - To respond to human need by loving service
4. Transform - To transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind and pursue peace and reconciliation
5. Treasure - To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation, and sustain and renew the life of the earth

Reflection 1

1. Tell

	Yes / No / Sometimes	Notes
Are our classroom libraries stocked with age-appropriate Bible stories, books and resources?		
Do we have regular school assemblies with a worship component?		
Do we have links between our school and parish?		
Do we display the visible elements of our ethos? Examples include, but not limited to, mission statement at the entrance to our school, Anglican cross on display, RE themed displays, a school / parish noticeboard.		
Do we have a prayer space in our school which reflects the liturgical calendar?		
Do we use prayer regularly throughout the school day?		
Do our Board of Management and staff meetings begin and end with a prayer?		
Does the school visit the church for worship?		
Do we visit the church regularly to explore the building as a liturgical and / or community space? Examples include church trails, use of the building for school based activities.		

2. Teach

	Yes / No / Sometimes	Notes
Do we have an RE curricular policy for teaching Follow Me in our school?		
Do our teachers plan appropriately for RE teaching through the Follow Me programme, including it in the same manner as other curricular subjects in their short-term planning, long-term planning and monthly progress reports?		
Do we teach the RE programme prescribed by our school Patron i.e. the Follow Me Programme?		
Are our classrooms adequately resourced for the Follow Me Programme or are further resources and supports required?		
Do we use the church building as teaching tool?		
Are we confident to say that the children in our school understand the concept of Faith?		
Are we sufficiently mindful of the feelings of children in our school who are of faiths other than Christian?		
Are we sufficiently mindful of the feelings of children in our school who are not religious?		

3. Tend

	Yes / No / Sometimes	Notes
Do we, as a school, put service of others and care for others at the heart of our policies and practice?		
Do we embed an ethic of care for self and others in our curricular planning and teaching?		
Do we seek to ensure that the school community is sufficiently mindful and aware of vulnerability among others?		
Do we, as employers, pay enough attention to the psychological and emotional wellbeing of all our staff?		

Are we satisfied that we express our thanks and appreciation sufficiently to all the staff in the school? (Principal/Teachers/SNA/Caretaker/Cleaner/School Secretary)		
Do we give due recognition to all that is achieved in the school by pupils and staff?		
Our school is an inclusive and welcoming school community which appreciates all its members?		

4. Transform

	Yes / No / Sometimes	Notes
Do we reflect on the importance of our ethos and gospel values when considering matters before us at a Board of Management meeting which are concerned with matters of justice and fairness?		
Do we engage in fundraising activities for charities who seek to address injustice in society (e.g. Bishop's Appeal)?		
Can resources be discreetly accessed for individuals in the school community who may need extra support from a financial or socio-economic perspective?		
Are we satisfied that children understand the principles of social justice and the duty to make the world a better place for all?		

5. Treasure

	Yes / No / Sometimes	Notes
Do we actively consider biodiversity and our environment in school policies and practices?		
Do we have an outdoor space which reflects the changing nature of the seasons? Examples can range from a school garden to a small green space with trees and plants.		

Reflection 2

ETHOS REFLECTION USING SCRIPTURAL VERSES

The Church of Ireland School may be seen as a network of relationships built on Scriptural values which reveal God's infinite and unconditional love for every human being.

This Reflection follows on from the '5 Marks of Mission' Reflection by providing a resource for Boards of Management to reflect and consider the work of the Board and School within a framework of specific Scriptural references and, in particular, the teachings of Jesus Christ as expressed in the Gospel narratives.

VALUES	Source Texts	Application	Question
Openness and inclusivity Jesus made friends with rich and poor, saints and sinners, foreigners	Lk 10:25-37, Good Samaritan, Lk 14:12-14 Banquet, Mk 2:15-17 Call of Levi,	Admissions, situations of conflict, pastoral care programme, day to day interaction.	How and/ or where is this happening in our school?
Service Jesus saw leadership in terms of service to others. It was not a question of putting burdens on others, but of helping them.	Mk 10:35-45, James and John, Jn 13:1-17 washing of the Feet Matt 23:3-4 helping with burdens, not adding to them. Matt 11:30 invitational	Leadership roles and Governance	How do we empower people to lead in service? Does our leadership serve the whole school community?
Awareness of the transcendent dimension. The presence of God in daily life.	Lk 11:1-13, Romans 12:9-18 Col 3:12-15. Eph 3:14-19 Being rooted	Prayer/ Spirituality	How does our school facilitate the awareness of God and Christ in the schools' life and witness?
A teacher points the way – gives good interpretation – leads by example. Taught with authority.	Mk 1:21-22; 6:2, 34. Jesus the teacher. Matt 21:28-32 challenge of the parables. I Pet 4:10-11 Using the Gifts Matt 25:14-30 Talents Phil 4:8-9	Approaches to teaching	Do we support our teachers in this? Is this part of the understanding of approach among teaching staff?
Where your treasure is, your heart is also. Building on foundations.	Lk 12:20-32 Trust, Jn 8:1-11 Respect Matt 7:24-29 Assimilation 1Cor3:2 Milk and solid food	Approaches to learning	What is the motivation for our learning?
Seeing connections between secular knowledge and spiritual knowledge.	Mk 4:1-20, 26-32, seed parables. Matt 16:1-3 Signs of the times, Matt 5:13-16 Salt and Light	Approaches to knowledge	Is there a false dichotomy between secular and spiritual in our school? Does faith infuse our school and school lives?
Reflective Practitioners – disciples gather to discuss what Jesus taught and said. Own hearts burn within us.	Mk 6:30 Take time out, Lk 24:32 recognising him. Lk 7:37-45 on not judging.	A reflective community	How often and in what way does this happen?
Do unto others. Prodigal Son. Law and Spirit	Matt 5:43-48 Loving enemies Lk 15:11-32 Prodigal Son forgiveness and judging Gal 5:18-26 Fruits of Spirit	Relationships in the school community	Are we living out our ethos? Do our school policies reflect our ethos and values?
Care and concern. Seeking the lost sheep.	Lk 15:3-10 Lost Sheep, Lost Coin, Matt 25:31-46 You did it to me.	Valuing all	Are we inclusive? Are we conceited?! Are we too comfortable? Who's "we"?!?
Friends appeal to Jesus for those in trouble.	Mk 2:1-6 Friends bring the paralysed man to Jesus. Mk 7:24-37 Needing help for another	Support	Is our school respectful? Have we a truly Christ centred community in our school?

*May He give you
all the Desires of your Heart
and make all your plans
succeed!*

Ps. 20 (4)

Key Points:

- The ethos of the school is reflexive.
- That the ethos of a Church of Ireland school should be open, invitational and respect the views of all.
- The ethos of a Church of Ireland school must be located within a Christian understanding to be an authentic expression of the life and witness of the Church of Ireland.
- The Church of Ireland Primary School does not stand apart from the Church but is a daily expression of the life and witness of the Church.
- The Anglican faith tradition in Ireland should be recognised, expressed and understood in a Church of Ireland Primary School.
- A duty rests upon the Board of Management, with accountability to the school patron, to ensure that the ethos of the school reflects the Church of Ireland faith, tradition and witness.
- It is hoped that the Reflection Guides displayed that the ethos of the Church of Ireland primary school and the values inherent in its ethos, such as welcome, inclusivity and respect for diversity, are deeply rooted in Scripture.

- Authors:

Dr Ken Fennelly and Mrs. Susan Ellis

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