

A Place for Christian Values in Scottish Education



This statement was developed by the CVE Project through extended consultation with teachers, parents and more than 15 Christian charities and denominations engaged in supporting schools across Scotland.

The positive influence of Christianity on Scottish Education is undeniable. From the founding of the ancient medieval Universities to the commitment to establish “a school in every parish”, the Christian Churches have upheld the importance of education for the flourishing of humanity. This is not surprising, given the Christian vision of the human person as a unique individual, created by a loving God who wishes us to “live life to the full” (John 10:10).

Christians continue to be heavily invested in Scottish education – as parents & carers, teachers, students, chaplains, advisers and representatives on Council education committees. They share a commitment to offer their own talents for the common good of their children, their families, their students and their communities. They wish to enable children and young people to make their own informed decisions in life, to appreciate and realise their full potential, to gain a sense of moral purpose in life, to form positive, life-enhancing relationships and to make connections with other communities, locally, nationally and globally.

It is clear that, in Curriculum for Excellence, Scottish education has embraced a vision and a set of values which are compatible with the Christian understanding of the human person. Schools are expected to deliver for all young people a range of experiences and outcomes so that they can aspire to develop human capacities as: *successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors*. It is recognised that the learning which young people experience should be integrated across various contexts for learning i.e., not only in curriculum areas and subjects but also through the ethos and life of school as a community, through interdisciplinary learning and through opportunities for personal achievement in and out of school.

To realise such a vision requires not only excellent approaches to learning and teaching, but also a commitment to partnership with families and community groups and a shared understanding of the values at the heart of Scottish society: *Wisdom, Justice, Compassion, Integrity*. These values, inscribed on the Mace in the Scottish Parliament, are inextricably linked to Christian belief.

In this modern, holistic view of learning, it is recognised that it is important for young people to learn about and through the beliefs and values which shape every part of life. Curriculum for Excellence specifically recognises the interdisciplinary nature of learning: children and young people need to develop the capacity for critical thinking based on informed personal values and beliefs in all 8 Curriculum Areas. They will also benefit from considering issues of religious belief and values through experiences of Religious Observance which “*creates chances to think about the nature and possible meaning of life and humans’ place in the world*”¹ and from the teaching of Religious and Moral Education:

*Children and young people must become aware that beliefs and values are fundamental to families and to the fabric of society in communities, local and global. There is an intrinsic value in learning about religion as well as learning from religion. . . Children and young people should be given opportunities to participate in service to others and to meet people who show their faith in action*²

¹ Scottish Government: Letter to Scottish Parliament Public Petitions Committee, 17th October 2013.

² http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/Images/rme_principles_practice_tcm4-540203.pdf

Rationale for Christian Values in Education

In the light of this understanding, it is clear that Christians can and should be fully committed to a range of educational initiatives which aim to improve the lives of children and young people.

Christian children and young people should be empowered to express their views in relevant discussion across the curricular areas. They should be encouraged to share their personal faith commitment (e.g. by contributing to Religious Observance) and to act as positive role models to others. They should feel supported by their school in their spiritual journey.

Christian parents & carers should be confident that their children will be learning in ways which sit comfortably with the values, attitudes and beliefs which they have fostered at home. Supported by teachers, parents and carers will promote in their children the qualities of understanding, tolerance, respect, empathy, compassion and a commitment to service. Parents and carers should see that, in all curricular areas, their children are developing informed ethical views, while in programmes of Religious and Moral Education, they are learning significantly about Christianity as well as about other world religions. Moreover, the school's provision of experiences of Religious Observance should complement their children's spiritual development which will, of course, be mainly nurtured at home and in their local Church. They should also be assured that the school will encourage young people to undertake various commitments, in and out of school, to show love of their "neighbour", both in the local community and further afield.

Christian teachers & support staff should be assured that their personal faith commitment can make a positive contribution, whether or not their school has an explicit faith mission. In non-denominational schools Christian teachers, while being able to contribute their understanding of values and beliefs in all curriculum areas into relevant discussions with pupils, will not proselytise i.e., try to persuade children towards any particular belief, practice or tradition. They may, however, play their part in supporting extra-curricular activities in which children and young people explore and share their religious beliefs and values with others.

Christian organisations, including voluntary groups and Churches, should feel confident about approaching schools to offer contributions to the educational provision offered to young people. This might take various forms: input to Chaplaincy work, opportunities for young people to participate in voluntary work, resources for religious and moral education and contributions to the discussion of particular social issues. They might also ask schools to inform pupils of out-of-school activities which are available to young people locally or nationally. There are many examples of long-standing arrangements around the country which have proven beneficial to learners, to schools and to communities. In all such activities, the intention should be to enrich the range of learning experiences and outcomes made available to young people.

Christian values have a proper and legitimate place in Scottish education not only because they are at the centre of our Parliamentary democracy but because they offer young people a framework for understanding their origins, their purpose, their identity and their destiny. All schools should provide opportunities for young people to explore these values in the context of addressing fundamental questions about themselves and the world around them.