



ST PATRICK'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY AND NURSERY SCHOOL A VOLUNTARY ACADEMY

STATEMENT BY THE BISHOPS OF ENGLAND AND WALES ON CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

In view of the uncertainties being expressed about the future development of education, we wish to reaffirm our essential commitment to Catholic schools, both primary and secondary, both maintained and independent.

The Catholic school aims to be a community within the wider Catholic body which promotes by its teaching, relationships and worship the following of Christ by its members. For its fruitfulness it depends particularly on the faith of its adult members and the way in which they are able to clothe that faith in daily living.

On behalf of the Catholic body we wish to thank the teachers in our schools for their generous service. Because of a variety of pressures (some educational, some economic, some administrative), the teaching profession is less attractive than it used to be; teachers feel overburdened, and undervalued. We are grateful to those many teachers, both Catholic and non-Catholic, whose continued dedication to their pupils both in school and out of school gives such a fine example of committed service.

Despite the support given by many non-Catholic teachers there are too few Catholic teachers to meet the demand in our schools. We wish to encourage young Catholics to enter the teaching profession, and to urge Catholic teachers to seek to work in Catholic schools. Whatever practical difficulties there may be, we believe that the teaching profession is one of the truly great vocations. The health of the nation depends significantly on the quality of our teachers, and the health of the Church in our countries depends greatly on the faith of our teachers.

The whole curriculum and way of life of the Catholic school is designed to enable its pupils to grow in every way to Christian maturity. The Catholicism of the school is more than its religious education programme; its whole curriculum must be rooted in a religious understanding of life, and its life should be based on the Gospel.

Religious education is described by the Education Reform Act as the basic part of the school curriculum. We endorse this description and recommend that in Catholic school at least 10% of teaching time should be set aside for the religious education of all pupils. We stress too, the need for religious education to be approached with proper academic rigour, and for attainment targets, programmes of study and assessment procedures (where appropriate) to be developed.

The strength of the maintained Catholic School relies particularly on its Governors, who under the new Education Act are expected to play an increasingly important part in the life of the school. We ask you to support Catholic schools in your area by being ready to work as Governors of these schools and to undertake any necessary training.

We wish also to thank parents for their support for Catholic schools. The Education Act reminds us that the school curriculum should promote 'the spiritual, moral, intellectual and physical development of pupils and of society'. The aim is one for which the curriculum and life of the Catholic school, based on the Gospel, should be particularly apt.

The continued support of parents, teachers, pupils, priests and, indeed, the whole church-going community, is essential if the rights and privileges of Catholic education are to be available into the next century. We ask confidently for that support.