

DIOCESAN DIRECTIVES AND PROTOCOLS FOR CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

As part of the Church's mission in education, the Diocesan Bishop¹ has a canonical responsibility to oversee and regulate Catholic education throughout the Diocese. Canon 806 of the Code of Canon Law provides that the Diocesan Bishop has the right to watch over and inspect all Catholic schools within his territory and to issue directives concerning their general regulation. These Directives apply to all Catholic schools in the Diocese, irrespective of their governance structure or trusteeship.

In response to developments within the Catholic Schools Inspectorate framework and the guidance provided by the Catholic Education Service, the Diocese has reviewed the Model Diocesan Directives and considered how best to articulate those requirements that are fundamental to the preservation and development of the Catholic character of our schools. This work has been undertaken in consultation with Religious Order trustees to ensure a shared understanding of those matters that are essential to the Catholic life and mission of schools across the Diocese.

The Diocesan Directives set out those requirements that the Bishop has determined should apply universally across all Catholic schools within the Diocese. The Directives will come into effect on 16 September 2026 and, from that date, will replace the existing Requirements previously issued by the Bishop. Once promulgated, they will have the status of particular diocesan law and will be binding on all Catholic schools within the Diocese.

Compliance with the Directives will also form part of the Catholic Schools Inspectorate framework. Schools will therefore be expected to demonstrate that they are meeting the obligations set out within them. Where a school is found not to be compliant with one or more Directives, it will be expected to address the matter. Under the current inspection framework, such non-compliance may have a bearing on the overall effectiveness grade that a school is able to achieve.

It is important to note, however, that the introduction of the Directives does not replace the Diocesan Protocols which remain in force. The Protocols serve a different purpose and

¹ Or those who have the interim governance of a Diocese while the See is vacant or impeded

apply to schools within diocesan trusteeship. They articulate the relationship between the Diocese and those responsible for the governance and leadership of those schools and set out the principles, procedures and practical arrangements that support their effective operation and the preservation and development of their Catholic character.

The Directives and Protocols serve different but complementary purposes. The Directives establish those requirements that all Catholic schools are required to observe under the Bishop's canonical authority. The Protocols provide the practical framework through which schools within diocesan trusteeship, governing boards, academy trusts and diocesan officers work together to promote the flourishing of Catholic education and support compliance with the Directives.

While the Directives replace the existing Diocesan Requirements, many schools will find that they reflect many practices and expectations that are already familiar. Their purpose is not to create unnecessary additional burdens, but to provide a clear and authoritative statement of those matters that the Bishop requires all Catholic schools within the Diocese to observe.

Copies of the [Diocesan Directives](#) and the [Diocesan Protocols](#) are available on the website. All headteachers, governors, directors and trustees are asked to familiarise themselves with the Directives. Those serving schools within diocesan trusteeship should also ensure that they are familiar with the Diocesan Protocols and that both documents are considered appropriately within their governance arrangements.

The Diocese remains committed to working in partnership with schools, governing boards and trusts in the spirit of solidarity, subsidiarity and shared responsibility that characterises Catholic education.

Should you have any questions regarding the Directives, the Protocols, or their implementation, please do not hesitate to contact the Diocesan Education Service, which will be pleased to provide advice, clarification and support.

Thank you for your continued commitment to Catholic education and for all that you do to support the mission of the Church in our schools.

Julie Oldroyd
Director of Education