

Diocese of Dunkeld
Approval of Teaching Posts in Catholic Schools
Guidelines for Candidates Applying for Posts in Catholic Schools

Introduction

Catholic education is more than simply following a curriculum or listing aspirations in a mission statement. It is learning in a way in which all members of the school community are invited to be open to God in their lives and the lives of others and, where the grace is given, to encounter the person of Jesus Christ.

With the head teacher as chief catechist and leader of the school, the teaching staff in particular are asked to interact with the young people in their care in a way which embodies and makes real the ideals of the Gospel, love of God and love of neighbour. For most, faith, ideals and values are not 'caught' by reading a book but in relationship with another. Staff in a Catholic school are asked by the Church to participate and support activities which underline the importance of these for a Christian community. For those who directly lead young people in learning about their faith, being a part of the believing community is essential. The importance of staffing our schools with suitable personnel cannot be overestimated.

Approbation of staff in a denominational school is also a legal matter. According to Scottish Law, any teacher appointed to a recognised denominational school is required to be '...approved as regards religious belief and character by representatives of the church or denominational body in whose interest the school has been conducted.'" (Education (Scotland) Act 1918; 1980; Self-Governing Schools etc. (Scotland) Act 1989). Where rights are given responsibilities also exist. Along with the approval of the religious syllabus in Catholic Schools, the authority, both in civil and church law, for the approval of teaching staff in Catholic schools in Scotland lies with the bishop of the diocese and his delegates.

The following document is not intended to replace the national guidelines drawn up by the Bishops' Conference of Scotland and available from the website of the Scottish Catholic Education Service (SCES) www.sces.org.uk. It is simply to explain the procedure further.

There are two sections to this document: 1. Guidelines for a candidate who is applying for a post in a Catholic school and 2. Guidelines for the referee. Please read them carefully. At the end of the document is a list of the church representatives to the various councils who directly deal with approval on behalf of the Bishop of Dunkeld. Their contact details are provided. Please send your Approval Form A to them and ask your referee to send Approval Form B to them also (details below).

1. Guidance for a Candidate for a teaching post in a Catholic School

If a person applies for a teaching position in a Catholic school, the Church wishes to acknowledge their generosity and assure them that they will be dealt with respectfully, justly and with compassion. The process of approval can sometimes seem daunting, not least because the candidate is asked personal questions of a type perhaps not asked before e.g. about their religious beliefs. It may seem that the Church is being judgemental or demanding; this is not the motivation for requesting information of this kind.

If someone is going to teach in a Catholic school, it is hoped that this will be an enriching experience for them and for the school. We live in a country where there is a great diversity in beliefs and backgrounds. While this is something to be celebrated, it also has consequences for work and life relationships. The Church wants to match, as closely as possible, people who will welcome the opportunities of teaching in a Catholic school with the beliefs of the community in which the person will give of their talents and life.

The main responsibility for applying for approval lies with the candidate but help is always available from head teachers, other staff who have been through the process, and from church representatives. It is also the responsibility of the candidate to inform the council or relevant education authority that they have approval from the Church. **Whether the candidate for a post is a Catholic or not, they must have approval** by the bishop or his representative to teach in a Catholic school. This applies to all teaching posts. It is recommended that approval should be sought at the same time as the candidate is applying for a post. If a candidate is the preferred candidate for a post, appointment to the post cannot be made until the candidate receives approval. This applies even to newly qualified teachers who may be allocated by the council, i.e. they are the **preferred candidate** until they receive approval.

The candidate is asked to go onto the SCES website <https://sces.org.uk> and download two forms, 'A' and 'B'. On 'Form A' they are asked to fill in some personal details, including their religion if any, the type of post they are applying for, and to name a referee who can be contacted to give evidence of the candidate's suitability to teach in a Catholic school. A second referee is desirable in case the first referee is not available for some reason. The referees will not be asked about a person's professional qualifications or abilities as a teacher but their character and their religious beliefs. This should be borne in mind when the candidate is thinking about their referees. The candidate is also asked to make a personal statement about their beliefs and values. This form must be sent to the relevant church representative (contact details on the SCES website and at the end of this document).

The candidate is also asked to give 'Form B' and a copy of the 'Charter for Catholic Schools' to their referee(s). The referee is asked to fill this form in accordingly and to send it to the relevant church representative as soon as possible. In the case of a practising Catholic, the referee must be your parish priest, i.e. the priest of the parish in which you reside, or the priest of the church which you regularly attend. In the case of a non-practising Catholic, the person applying for the post is encouraged to have a conversation with their church rep. It may be that a priest knows them well, even the priest of the parish in which they reside and would be willing to give a reference. If not, then a suitable professional person (usually in the same category as those eligible to sign a passport form) who knows the candidate well enough to attest to their character and religious beliefs can be approached. When someone who is not a Catholic is applying for a post in a Catholic school, again the referee should be a professional person able to give some evidence of the candidate's moral and religious outlook. Wherever possible, candidates are encouraged to seek a referee other than their head teacher, though this may not always be possible. All personal information is kept secure in accordance with the Diocese of Dunkeld's data protection policy (see Diocesan Website for details).

Final approval will always be given in writing. Should the candidate be refused approval, this too will be given in writing along with the reasons for not granting approbation. The candidate may appeal if approval is not given.

Approval must be sought for each new post or each change in the nature of the post. For example, if the person has been approved for a limited time in the case of a temporary appointment and is applying for the post on a permanent basis, approval must be sought again in the manner described above.

Particular Requirements

When the teaching post for which the candidate has applied involves teaching religious education, the candidate should have a Catholic Teaching Certificate (CTC). In the case of promoted posts, the possession of a CTC is an expectation.

If you should require advice or assistance with this process, please do not hesitate to get in touch with your church representative.

2. Guidance for Referees

A referee in the case of the approval process for teaching posts in Catholic schools is someone who **knows** the candidate well enough to give some indication of their character and religious beliefs. The referee is not being asked to comment on their professional ability or qualification as a teacher. Any information or comments made on the candidate will be kept in the strictest confidence and will follow the diocesan policy in its compliance with regulations concerning the safeguarding of personal data.

When Catholic candidates approach priests for a reference

Parish or assistant priests are asked to give references only to people that they know. Usually, the priest will be a priest of a parish where the candidate lives. If a priest is asked for a reference from someone who attends his church regularly but does not actually reside in their parish, as long as that priest is satisfied as to their practice and knows them reasonably well, they can be considered, **within the Diocese of Dunkeld**, as their primary referee. It may be courteous and advisable, wherever possible, for said priest to notify the parish priest of the parish in which the candidate resides so as to 'keep everyone in the loop', as it were. In each case, the priest is asked to re-familiarise himself with the 'Charter for Catholic Schools', a copy of which should be given to him by the candidate.

In the case of a non-practicing Catholic, then that person is encouraged to have a conversation with their church representative. If the person applying for the post is known to the parish priest and he (or another priest) is happy to give a reference as to their religious belief and character, then this is permissible and may even lead to closer ties. Again, they should have to hand a copy of the 'Charter for Catholic Schools.'

If the person applying for a post in the Catholic school is not known to the priest who has been asked for a reference, the priest **must refuse** to give the reference, even if the family is known to him. It may be that the candidate is a practicing Catholic and is known to another priest, or the previous parish priest, or some other person, in which case they can be encouraged to approach that individual. If the individual concerned is a non-practicing Catholic and is unknown to the priest, they can be pointed to another type of referee.

When someone other than a priest is approached to give a reference

A candidate for a teaching post in a Catholic school may approach a professional person who knows them well enough to attest to their religious belief and character. If someone is approached to offer a reference, it may be by someone who is asking them to be a 'second referee' or, in the case of someone who is not a Catholic or a Catholic who does not attend church, they may be asked to be the primary referee.

If they are comfortable with this, in that they know the person well and have some idea of what working in a Catholic school entails, this may not be too onerous. However, it may be that they know the person but have little idea of what working in a Catholic school involves or be unsure of the suitability of the person for such a post. The referee is **not being asked to make a moral judgement** on the person but to attest to their suitability for a particular post, in so far as they are able. The Church is asking a great deal of such a referee and appreciates the time they take to consider the matter carefully.

The candidate should have provided them with a copy of the 'Charter for Catholic Schools.' If they did not, then the referee should ask them for a copy. The referee is being asked to give some indication of the candidate's religious belief and character. The Church, as with other institutions simply asks for honesty in references. For example, the candidate may be a perfectly good person and/or a close friend but if the referee has certain knowledge that they do not support Catholic schools or are averse to Catholicism, then it is inappropriate for them to be teaching in a Catholic school.

If the referee is unsure of what is being asked of them, then they should ask the person who approached them for the contact details of the relevant church representative or the Diocese. The Church asks that the referee **not give a reference to someone they do not know.**

Catholic Church Representatives on Councils

Diocese of Dunkeld

By Council/Education Authority

Angus Council

Miss Lesley Hood, 4 Edradour Place Arbroath DD11 5JX.

Email Lesley.hood@ymail.com

Dundee City Council

Mrs Moira Leck, 42 Denoon Terrace, Dundee, DD2 2EB

Email moira.red@hotmail.com

Fife Council

Mr George Haggarty, 7 Cambustay Gardens, Broughty Ferry, Dundee DD5 2SR

Email George.haggarty@hotmail.co.uk

Perth and Kinross Council

Mrs Margaret McFarlane, 3 Elgin Street, Dundee DD3 8NL

Email maggiemcfar@yahoo.com

Clackmannanshire Council

Fr Michael Freyne MHM, St Bernadette's, Baingle Brae, Tullibody FK10 2SG

Email mafreyne@btinternet.com