

## Remarkable Catholic Schools in the Archdiocese of Southwark

*“Education is integral to the mission of the Church to proclaim the Good News. First and foremost every Catholic educational institution is a place to encounter the living God who in Jesus reveals his transforming love and truth.”<sup>1</sup>*

All schools in the Archdiocese of Southwark have been established to provide the best possible quality of education to the young people entrusted to them. This is one element of being places of ‘Good News’, because such education sets the foundation for adult life and a gateway to opportunities. Pope Benedict XVI’s statement above, though, makes it clear that the educational task goes beyond the processes of teaching and learning. To fulfil this mission, our schools are to be places where all in the school community (young people and adults) ‘encounter’ a ‘transforming love and truth’. In this way, Christ is at the centre of all that we do at our schools.

Putting Christ at the centre of school life is seen most obviously in the prayer life of the school. However, it goes far beyond that. It is seen in the ways the adults work with young people, the ways young people treat each other, the way adults treat each other and the way visitors are welcomed to the school. It is seen in curriculum design that seeks to enable all pupils to flourish and reach their potential. It is seen in the pastoral systems, behaviour management processes and employment procedures. It is seen in the outreach to the local community and fundraising for charities who work with those in need around the world.

Underpinning the work of schools are the values inspired by the Gospel. Our schools should seek to fulfil the call to be places of ‘Good News’ by using these values as the driving forces behind all aspects of their work. The publication *Christ at the Centre* articulates those values as:

*Faithfulness & Integrity; Dignity & Compassion; Humility & Gentleness;  
Truth & Justice; Forgiveness & Mercy; Purity & Holiness; Tolerance & Peace.<sup>2</sup>*

Our schools should also be communities with a commitment to be of service to the Common Good. Schools are not in isolation. They serve the young people and families with their local parish(es). They are part of a network of Catholic schools in their area and across the diocese. They work alongside the other schools and service providers within their locality. It is expected that schools collaborate to meet local needs and, where appropriate, provide support to other schools. In this way the seven principles of Catholic Social Teaching focus the decisions of school leaders and governors, staff and pupils.

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<sup>1</sup> Pope Benedict XVI, Address to Catholic Educators, Catholic University of America in Washington, DC. 17<sup>th</sup> April 2008

<sup>2</sup> Mgr Marcus Stock, *Christ at the Centre: Why the Church provides Catholic School*; Catholic Truth Society 2005 (revised 2013). See pages 15-17

*Dignity:* God is present in every human person, regardless of religion, culture, nationality, orientation or economic standing. Each one of us is unique and beautiful. We are called to treat every person with loving respect.

*Solidarity:* Solidarity arises when we remember we belong to each other.

*The common good:* The common good means that the fruits of the earth belong to everyone. No one should be excluded from the gifts of creation.

*The option for the poor:* This reminds us of God's preferential love for the poorest and most vulnerable.

*Peace:* Peace is a cornerstone of our faith. Christ, the Prince of Peace, sacrificed his life for us on the cross.

*Care for creation:* Everything is interconnected, and all creation praises God. It is our Christian vocation to care for the earth.

*Dignity of work and participation:* Pope Leo XIII in 1891 (*Rerum Novarum*) shone a light on exploitation and injustice. This work continues to be vital.<sup>3</sup>

*“This means that the Church provides Catholic schools to be more than just places where pupils are equipped with learning and skills for the workplace and responsible citizenship. Rather, they are to be communities where the spiritual, cultural and personal worlds within which we live are harmonised to form the roots from which grow our values, motivations, aspirations and the moral imperatives that inform our choices and actions as person.”<sup>4</sup>*

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<sup>3</sup> <https://cafod.org.uk/Pray/Catholic-social-teaching#common%20good>

<sup>4</sup> Mgr Marcus Stock, *Christ at the Centre: Why the Church provides Catholic School*; Catholic Truth Society 2005 (revised 2013)

referencing '*Gravissimum Educationis*, Declaration of Vatican II on Catholic education. Oct 2019 #19.