



## SPECIAL CHARACTER FACT SHEET

### Some easy, practical ideas to foster parish–school relationships

#### School – parish relationships

Establish an annual get together of Boards of Trustees and parish councils.

Establish regular meetings of parish pastors and other parish representatives with principal(s) and Board chairperson(s) - other than at Board meetings.

Ask parish priests/pastors to positively promote the school(s) and its activities in the parish.

#### Planning for common school – parish activities

- Do some joint strategic planning, with parish pastors and leaders, school Board(s) of Trustees, senior management personnel and the PTFA. Include in the areas for discussion: communication networks and support structures, evangelisation programmes (especially for ‘unchurched’ parents), practical and social support structures that breathe life into evangelisation.
- Co-ordinate school and parish activities to avoid clashes.
- Identify the human and other resources which parish and school leaders/organisers can make available to each other. Consider if it is possible to enable the school library to become a parish library and information resource centre.
- Establish a local or regional day for pastors and principals, where ideas to create stronger co-operation can be generated, and where tasks that proclaim the Good News to the wider community can also be talked about and subsequently actioned.
- Encourage students to accept the parish(es) as part of their school community rather than some extraneous body outside the school community. Set expectations for the students, the Board of Trustees and teachers, and the parish, which will make this possible.

#### Common school – parish activities

- Cooperate on a joint school-parish Sacramental preparation programme.
- Enable the regular Liturgy of the Word for the children to be attractive, with both parents and school staff having some input.
- Promote the idea that the parish is much more than the parish priests/pastors and parish council: it includes many/most of the families at the school, at least some of the school staff and a number of groups, societies etc. which can often be of help to the school - and vice versa.
- Enable teacher parishioners to have a role providing a practical link between the school and the parish.

- Establish combined parish/school service networks to assist families in emergencies and other difficult situations.
- Work on using peer ministry models for students, involving both school and parish personnel.
- At Christmas time the parish and school have a Jesse Tree project to provide gifts for children who might otherwise not have them.

## School involvement with the parish

- Invite the school principal to speak to parish groups.
- The Director of Religious Studies and staff assist with the sacramental programme and provide art work to decorate the church for particular liturgical seasons.
- Enable students to play a number of (well prepared) roles in school/parish Sunday Masses; e.g. students' band or choir to play occasionally at Sunday Mass. Involve parents in these Masses also.
- Children's art to be included in parish newsletter (could involve an art competition).
- Students help fold the weekly parish newsletter, they contribute to the food bank and support community appeals.

## Parish presence in the school

- The parish priest is a visible presence in the school. He relates very well to the children and knows them by name.
- Parish priest could be present at school Open Days to explain preference criteria and procedures and inform prospective parents what else the parish has to offer families.
- Parish priests are invited to participate in the college prize givings. They are informed about parishioners enrolled at the college and receive a copy of the college year book.
- The parish priest and assistant priests often join the staff for morning tea and visit classes for special lessons. From time to time they join a class for their morning prayer.
- Parishioners and parish groups are invited to visit and become practically involved in the school.
- Each class is linked with a parishioner who will join them for Masses and assemblies, share prayer intentions and visit at special times of the year.
- A parishioner takes the 'Seasons for Growth' programme for students who have had a major change or loss in their lives.
- The Year 8 students have one session a week with the Parish Youth Worker, who encourages them to continue their relationship with the parish by joining the Parish Youth Group.
- Parishioners to visit children who are sick or in hospital and let them know someone is praying for them.
- Article/feature on altar servers in parish newsletter and in school newsletter.
- Parish newsletter – extra copies to school (to ensure those not currently on parish roll receive a copy). Also extra copies at church. List the names of the families new to the school in the newsletter (with their permission).

## Families of students

- Special Mass at start of each term to welcome any new parents since the last time. Offer to place names of families onto the parish roll on enrolment at the school. Home visit to all new families in a pastoral, welcoming way.
- Initiate or strengthen the Our Family programme, which is designed to put faith resources into the homes of families with pre-school children. This has been developed by the Pastoral Services Team in the Wellington Archdiocese, and is available nationally.
- Family Ministry to become involved with implementing parent-to-parent programme in the school.
- At the time of First Communion the parish priest visits all the families and provides them with a useful leaflet on praying as a family. He also gives this out when parents come for preference cards.
- Encourage parents of those in the school(s) to participate in the Passionist Parish Family Group movement or similar groups.

- Establish a support group of parishioners who are prepared to befriend and walk with parents who may have had little contact with the Church.
- Suggest a possible evangelisation programme new parents could be interested in (e.g., Catholics returning home, Alpha).

## Administration ideas

- Have a combined website, Email newsletters.
- Once a month have a special insert from school and parish to go in one another's newsletters.
- Altar servers' training programme conducted through the school with input from the priest.
- Advertise and promote parish activities in school newsletters.
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- Place school brochures and information on a bulletin board in the church foyer.
- Send altar servers roster to school and remind people each week.
- Fridge magnet and information sheet in school enrolment pack. Include Mass times in pack.
- Give out parish pack/information with school enrolment pack.
- Copies of the college newsletter are sent to each parish within the area for distribution

## NZCEO