



EMPLOYMENT FACT SHEET

THE PURPOSE OF AND DETERMINING THE ACCEPTABILITY OF SCHEDULE 6, CI 47 (C) SPECIAL CHARACTER POSITIONS¹

Schedule 6 CI 47(c) of the Education and Training Act 2020 sets out the requirements for special character positions. Special character positions carry a special responsibility for religious instruction².

Every teacher in a Catholic school has an obligation to recognise and support the special character of the school in a manner that respects the religious instruction and religious observances practiced in the school. All teachers need to have spelled out to them both in the job application pack and at the interview, what this means, and they need to agree to do this. At the same time, special character positions provide the legal safeguard, ensuring that the school can employ a sufficient number of Catholic teachers who understand and live by the special character, so that the school is truly a Catholic community. Teachers create this community by everything they say and do, and the Principal and Director of Religious Studies need the support of a sufficient number of other Catholic teachers to sustain the Catholic community of the school.

Therefore teachers in special character positions are not appointed simply to teach Religious Education, although this is the specialist task of some teachers with special character positions. They are appointed to contribute to the religious instruction of the school. This phrase was chosen with care at the time of the Private Schools Conditional Integration Act 1975, and it continues to be useful because it implies far more than Religious Education – it includes the whole Catholic special character of the school, all of which is designed to contribute to the religious instruction of the students.

Determining acceptability for a Schedule 6, CI 47 Special Character (tagged) position

A schedule 6, CI 47 position is one in which the person is representing the Catholic community in a ministry role. It is the policy of the New Zealand Catholic Bishops (2013), therefore, that the person appointed must be a baptised Catholic who is active in a Catholic parish or Catholic Eucharistic community, and who is an authentic witness and role model for Catholic students. This should be endorsed by the applicant's parish priest, ethnic chaplain or lay pastoral co-ordinator. Note that a catechumen who has reached committal stage may also be considered.

An explanation of the Schedule 6, CI 47 requirement in the Education & Training Act

The legal definition is analysed as follows: "Willingness and ability to take part in religious instruction appropriate to that school shall be a condition of appointment." (Education and Training Act, Schedule 6, CI 47)

Willingness means the free offer and acceptance of involvement. Not coerced.

¹ Read in conjunction with Factsheet 10 Acceptability and Criteria for Acceptability

² It includes teaching or explaining the doctrines and practices of the faith, not only in Religious Education classes but also through the indirect teaching which occurs through role modelling and witness to Catholic values, behaviour, and general Catholic life. Congregation for Catholic Education (1998). *The Religious Dimension of Education in Catholic Schools*, para. 66- 70

Ability means possessing acceptable experience, qualifications, and qualities, and providing evidence of these to the satisfaction of the Proprietor and the employer. (See further comments in the section General Comments on acceptability, below.)

Take part in means to participate in a way or ways appropriate to the position held.

Religious instruction means through word or action, teaching, explaining or modelling the doctrines, values and practices of the Catholic faith.

Appropriate to that school means:

“The school is a Roman Catholic School in which the whole School community through the general school programme and in its religious instruction and observances, exercises the right to live and teach the values of Jesus Christ. These values are as expressed in the Scriptures and in the practices, worship and doctrine of the Roman Catholic Church, as determined from time to time by the Roman Catholic Bishop of the Diocese of ...” (Integration Agreement)

Shall be a condition of appointment means that the requirement is mandatory, no exception; an integral part of the job.

Schools’ Integration Agreements state that, as well as the Schedule 6, CI 47 tags for the Principal and the Director of Religious Studies, the school is required to have a proportion of other teaching positions that are tagged (about 40% for secondary schools and 60% for primary schools).

General comments on acceptability

The applicant must be judged “acceptable” for the level of responsibility inherent in the position. The applicant’s likely development in religious understanding and commitment is to be taken into account. This may be particularly relevant in the case of a young teacher, or in the case of an applicant moving into the Catholic school system. Different levels of ability to “take part in religious instruction” are to be expected from teachers and those in positions of leadership, in particular Directors of Religious Studies and Principals. Diocesan offices are able to give guidance on this.

It is possible to deem an applicant acceptable subject to certain conditions (which are then to be included in the person’s job description and performance appraisal). Such a condition is normally a contractual requirement to meet the appropriate qualification and certification level for the position. In such a case the Board would endeavour to ensure it is possible for the applicant to achieve the qualification and may agree to provide assistance with the costs of the course.

Further comments on the definition of ‘religious instruction’ and ‘special character positions’

Religious Instruction is evangelisation – it is the passing on of faith, through the ongoing establishment and support of a Christian community which lives out its faith, witnessing to the Gospel in daily action and attitudes. It includes teaching or explaining the doctrines and practices of the faith, not only through Religious Education classes but also through the indirect teaching which occurs through role modelling and witness to Catholic values, behaviour, and general Catholic life.

All teachers in special character positions carry out religious instruction outside the Religious Education curriculum, and are effective in so far as they contribute to the whole evangelising function of the school, assisting in promoting the faith education of those in the school community. They teach:

- what it means to be human ... A teacher who has a clear vision of the Christian milieu and lives in accord with it will be able to help young people develop a similar vision, and will give them the inspiration they need to put it into practice. (*The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School*, pp. 76–77, *Congregation for Catholic Education*, 1988)

Teachers in special character positions respond to a call: to witness to the Gospel, to continue and deepen their commitment to the Church, to foster Christian community, to seek out ways to serve the Christian community and to continue acquiring the knowledge, skills and abilities needed to communicate the Gospel message effectively.

Boards and Principals need to develop and provide teachers with a detailed statement of the actions and behaviours expected of those holding tagged positions. These might include:

- membership of the Catholic Character committee
- specific roles in the preparation of school liturgies and assemblies
- assistance with the arrangement of prayer resources for classrooms and the staffroom
- interaction with the local parish(es) on behalf of the school
- promotion of opportunities for staff professional development in special character
- responsibility for aspects of the induction of new staff into the special character of the school
- continuing support of one or more non-Catholic teachers (to assist them to understand particular Catholic practices within the school)
- responsibilities in the development of values and virtues programmes
- a range of other tasks.

The principal needs to ensure that teachers in special character positions receive regular professional development time on their role, including discussion of how this role can be carried out or deepened within the school. They should also ensure that their fulfilment of this role is appraised and recorded. Teachers should be encouraged to obtain qualifications and certification in Catholic Special Character.

However, it is crucial that the development of a deeper understanding of the role of teachers with special character positions does not undermine the responsibility of all teachers to contribute to the special character of the school, especially if there are other Catholics on the staff who do not hold special character positions. Strengthening the understanding of the work of those in special character positions should strengthen the work of all.

Filling Special Character positions

Tagged positions may be filled internally, provided that the availability of the tag is advertised to the whole staff, so that anyone qualified may apply to take it up. Applicants fill out a Schedule 6, CI 47 form. The diocesan office (or the appointments committee, in the case of a secondary school) then determines acceptability in the usual way and after that the principal (or the Board committee in the case of a senior appointment) decides who is the most suitable applicant for the position. The appointment is announced to the staff in due course.

It is recommended, however, that the position be advertised in the Education Gazette (as a regraded position for which there is no actual vacancy), as this ensures there is a satisfactory paper trail. Even when there is only one potential applicant the process of filling in the Schedule 6, CI 47 form and determining acceptability still needs to be gone through.

Whichever method is used, it is important to do the paperwork and file it appropriately. In some instances, schools have found that they do not know which staff members actually hold special character positions, because proper records were not kept in the past.

Reasons for taking up tagged positions

Teachers considering taking on a special character position should say why they wish to do so, particularly if they are secondary school teachers who do not teach Religious Education. The most important reason is the value of contributing to the special character of the school. A second reason could be that it is of significant value for those hoping to continue their career in Catholic education.

Other issues for Boards

When making appointments to tagged positions, Boards need to be aware of their responsibility to ensure that the person appointed will be able to model, support and lead the Catholic special character of the school to an appropriate degree for the level of the position.

Secondary school appointment committees (or full Boards if appropriate) need to ensure that all the referees named on the Schedule 6, CI 47 form are contacted, preferably by phone not just in writing, and that any points of uncertainty have been further clarified with the applicant. It is wise to ask for help from the diocesan office or the Proprietor when framing questions to ask referees and applicants in relation to their ability to carry out the requirements of a tagged position.

Members of boards of primary schools need to be aware that it is inappropriate and unwise to discuss with applicants any reasons why they may not have been considered acceptable for a position. Acceptability is determined by the diocesan office on behalf of the Proprietor, and diocesan staff will discuss issues of acceptability with the applicant if necessary.

Boards of both primary and secondary schools are reminded to ensure that there is a Proprietor's appointee on the appointments committee. This is a requirement in law. Further information is to be found in the Employment section of the Handbook for Boards of Trustees of New Zealand Catholic State-integrated Schools 2020.

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