

DIOCESE OF HEXHAM AND NEWCASTLE

BRIEFING NOTE ON PRACTISING CATHOLIC



Headteacher/Deputy Headteacher Appointments: 'Practising Catholic'

General background

The instrument of government for a VA school states:

"The school was founded by and is part of the Catholic Church. The school is to be conducted as a Catholic School in accordance with the canon law and teachings of the Roman Catholic Church and in accordance with the trust deed of the Diocese of Hexham and Newcastle and in particular:

- a. Religious Education is to be in accordance with the teachings, doctrines, disciplines and general and particular norms of the Catholic Church;*
- b. Religious worship is to be in accordance with the rites, practices, disciplines and liturgical norms of the Catholic Church;*

and at all times the school is to serve as a witness to the Catholic faith in Our Lord Jesus Christ".

The articles of association for an academy states:

- a. Any Academy or Academies established under Clause 4(a) (i) shall be conducted in accordance with:
 - (i) The teachings, practices and tenets of the Catholic Church;
 - (ii) Canon Law and the Trust Deed;
 - (iii) Any diocesan directives for the time being in force.
- b. For any Academy or Academies established under Article 4(a)(i):
 - (i) Religious education is to be in accordance with the teachings, doctrines, discipline and general and particular norms of the Catholic Church.
 - (ii) Religious worship is to be in accordance with the rites, practices, discipline and liturgical norms of the Catholic Church.
 - (iii) at all times the school is to serve as a witness to the Catholic faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.

- (iv) the Company shall have regard to any advice issued by the Diocesan Bishop and Religious Superior;
- (v) the Academies shall be subject to the absolute control of the Diocesan Bishop and shall be carried on under and in accordance with his directions in all respects.
- (vi) all charitable work of whatever nature carried on for the time being under the trusts of these presents shall be subject to the absolute control of the Diocesan Bishop and shall be carried on under and in accordance with his directions in all respects.

Appointment of headteacher/deputy headteacher

In relation to the appointment of headteacher/deputy headteacher the Bishops' Conference as stated in the Memorandum of Understanding

'The post of headteacher, deputy headteacher or coordinator of Religious Education shall be reserved for practising Catholics.'

Advertisements for these posts should make clear from the outset that applications are invited in accordance with these requirements'.

Memorandum of Bishops' Conference of England and Wales on the appointment of Teachers to Catholic Schools

Diocesan policy

In the Diocese of Hexham and Newcastle it is a requirement that the headteacher, deputy headteacher, RE coordinator, head of RE and school lay chaplains are practising Catholics at the time of application.

'Practising Catholic' is listed unambiguously as the first essential criteria. A positive faith reference is essential and the priest is explicitly asked to comment upon an applicant's commitment to Catholic beliefs and practices.

The diocesan statement on equal opportunities on employment states:

'The posts of headteacher and deputy head are reserved for practising Catholics.'

In fulfilling the objectives of Catholic schools, the board have regard to matters which are particularly significant in the light of the sacramental teachings of the Church. Catholic teachers by their example and practice are witnesses to the Gospels and to the Church's teachings. The governing body would therefore, in line with its responsibilities, reserve the right to take account of circumstances which were genuinely within a person's control and which might include marital status, avowed personal conviction, belief or conduct'.

The diocesan Memorandum of Understanding states:

Employment of the Principal and Key Teaching Staff

1. *'The headteacher or principal of the school as well as the deputy headteacher(s) and the head or coordinator of Religious Education shall be practising Catholics'...*

Marital status

Applicants for the posts of headteacher and deputy headteacher whose conduct is incompatible with the precepts and tenets of the Catholic faith would not be deemed as meeting the first essential criteria of practising Catholic. An applicant living with a partner would not meet the essential criteria as:

'The sexual act must take place exclusively within marriage'.

Catechism of the Catholic Church, paragraph 2390

'Sexuality and Marriage: There are two fundamental principles which determine Catholic teaching on sexual matters: that the sexual expression of love is intended by God's plan of creation to find its place exclusively within marriage between a man and a woman, and that this expression of love must be open to the possible transmission of new life. This, of course, is a great challenge. It means that many types of sexual activity, including same-sex sexual activity, are not consistent with the teachings of the Church. No individual, bishop, priest or lay-person is in a position to change this teaching of the Church which we hold to be God-given'.

Archbishop Vincent Nichols, The Catholic Herald, March 2012