

Catholic School Recognition **by the** **Roman Catholic Bishop of Manchester**

Introduction

“Education is integral to the mission of the Church to proclaim the good news. First and foremost, every Catholic institution is a place to encounter the Living God who in Jesus Christ reveals His transforming love and truth.” (Pope Benedict XVI). Catholic schools exist to form young people in the faith and to provide a faith-based environment for their education. In cooperation and partnership with parents, the first educators of their children, these schools seek to educate the whole child by providing an excellent education.

Designation of a School as Catholic

The Roman Catholic Bishop of Manchester, New Hampshire has sole ecclesiastical authority to recognize and to designate a school as "Catholic" within the Diocese of Manchester. Written approval must be obtained from the Roman Catholic Bishop of Manchester before a school may be designated as a Catholic school.

Governance of Catholic Schools

The governance structures for Catholic schools vary depending on the organization that has overall responsibility for the school. The Diocese of Manchester has direct responsibility for all aspects of diocesan-owned schools and, through parishes, for all aspects of parish schools. With respect to independent (private) Catholic schools, the responsibility for the day-to-day operations, instruction, financing, and overall direction of the school rests with the community or organization. Thus, the Bishop of Manchester (and the Diocese of Manchester) shall have no financial obligations or responsibilities for the direct oversight of independent (private) schools.

Standards for All Catholic Schools

Canon law (Church law) on Catholic education is summarized in Canons 793 through Canons 806. Canons 803, 804, 805, and 806 are “anchor canons” in describing and recognizing the Catholic essence of a school. These canons define how the Catholic school must be operated and/or be recognized by Church authority and address the nature of Catholic religious formation and education. All Catholic schools, whether they are sponsored by a parish, the diocese, a religious order, or a group of lay people, must abide by applicable Canon law. They also must meet the following standards:

- A. **Catholic Identity**. All Catholic elementary and secondary schools in the Diocese shall abide by the following Catholic identity standards and the supporting Catholic Identity policies that are central to the nature of a Catholic school. It is also imperative that any school called “Catholic” provide a level of academic excellence that is at least as distinguished as that in other schools of the region. Schools owned and operated by the Diocese of Manchester or its parishes shall be governed by additional policies, including those in the areas of excellence, affordability, and accessibility.

1. Communion and Cooperation with the Bishop. All Catholic schools shall have a formal and defined relationship with the Diocese and specifically with the Bishop, who has oversight of the teaching of the faith in all Catholic schools. These practices are the practical mechanism to maintain communion within the Church.
 - a. Mission. All Catholic schools shall have a written statement of mission and philosophy in accord with Church teachings.
 - b. Communion with the Local Church. All Catholic schools shall communicate, consult, and collaborate with all involved parties, particularly the appropriate diocesan offices, in an effort to ensure communion with the local Church.
 - c. Catholic Identity Review. All Catholic schools' religious education programs, sacramental life, and Catholic identity shall be reviewed by diocesan officials at least once every three years. Such review shall include submission of a written report by the school and a visit by diocesan officials.
 - d. Relationship with Local Pastors and Parishes. All Catholic schools shall maintain a close relationship with local pastors and parishes, particularly in the areas of religious education and sacramental life.
2. Appropriate Celebration of Sacramental Life. All Catholic schools shall adhere to all diocesan sacramental norms and policies to ensure the development of an authentic spiritual and sacramental life for students.
 - a. Spiritual Formation. All Catholic schools shall provide appropriate occasions for prayer, liturgical worship, and the celebration of the Sacraments of Reconciliation and the Eucharist to ensure religious instruction and spiritual formation of students.
 - b. Religious Instructions and Worship Attendance. All Catholic schools are places of faith formation and all Catholic school students, regardless of religious background, shall attend school prayer and worship services, and they shall fully participate in religious instruction. All Catholic students are expected to fulfill the serious obligation of attending regular Sunday Mass at their home parish and to receive frequently the Sacraments of Reconciliation and the Eucharist, once they are eligible.
 - c. Sacramental Norms. All Catholic schools shall adhere to the sacramental norms and policies of the Diocese, and shall respect local parishes as the sacramental home for parents, students, and all parishioners.
 - d. Sacramental Space. The celebration of the sacraments in all Catholic schools shall occur in spaces that are appropriate and suitable for authentic worship.
 - e. Sacramental Celebration. First Reconciliation, First Communion, and Confirmation shall be celebrated in the parish that the student's family attends. Pastors may allow exemptions to this policy for good cause.

- f. **Prayer Life.** Regular prayer and devotions shall be standard practice in all Catholic schools. The school day shall begin and end with prayer taken from our Catholic treasury of prayers, and all meals are to be blessed.
 3. **Teaching the Faith.** All Catholic schools shall adhere to all diocesan policies regarding religious education to ensure that the faith is effectively and authentically taught in the school.
 - a. **Oversight of the Bishop.** All Catholic schools shall conform in all matters of religious education to the oversight of the Bishop.
 - b. **Teaching of Religion.** The teaching of religion in all Catholic schools shall be subject to the same standards of professionalism and excellence as all subjects in the school to include, but not be restricted to, allocation of resources, teacher professional development, evaluation, assessment, and hours of instruction.
 - c. **Religious Education Foundation.** The religious education program of all Catholic schools shall have as its foundation the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, the *United States Catholic Catechism for Adults*, the *General Directory of Catechesis*, and the *National Directory of Catechesis*. They shall also follow national and diocesan directives. These programs shall conform to the religion curriculum of the Diocese of Manchester.
 - d. **Religion Teachers.** All religion teachers shall be practicing Catholics, qualified to teach religion by the Diocese. They shall have a deep knowledge of and a desire to hand on the authentic doctrine of the Church and live as authentic witnesses to the faith.
 4. **Environment and Catholic Identity.** Catholic identity shall be present and explicit in all aspects of all Catholic schools, including the school's mission statement. The school presents evidence of clear commitment to witness the faith in all activities. The entire school shall be permeated with the Spirit of the Gospel for the effective formation and faith development of students.
 - a. **Principals and Catholic Identity.** All principals or chief administrators shall be practicing Catholics who uphold the teaching of the faith and are committed to Catholic education that is academically excellent and rooted in Gospel values.
 - b. **Teachers and School Staff.** Catholic teachers and Catholic staff shall be hired whenever possible. Administrators, faculty, and staff shall be qualified, supportive of the teachings of the Church, and imbued with a strong sense of the mission of Catholic schools. They shall act in ways that promote the best interests of the Church and do not violate the principles or tenets of the Catholic faith. All staff shall be responsible for integrating Catholic identity and Church teaching across the curriculum and in all school activities.

All school administrators and all faculty members shall adhere to Catholic faith, teaching, and moral discipline, and shall not contradict the Catholic faith, teaching, and moral discipline either publicly or privately, and shall not harm communion with the Church.

- c. **School Sponsored Guests and Activities.** School sponsored guests, public statements, public events, and community activities of all Catholic schools shall not contradict the Catholic faith, teaching, and moral discipline, and shall not harm communion with the local Church.
 - d. **Fostering Vocations.** All Catholic school communities shall regularly and as a matter of course promote and foster interest in, and respect for, all vocations, presenting vocations to religious life and to the priesthood as real life options for students.
 - e. **Social Justice.** The life of Catholic schools shall reflect the Catholic Church's teaching on social justice and shall witness service to others. The Catholic Church's teaching on ecumenism shall be fostered.
 - f. **Child Safety and Protection.** Diocesan and parish Catholic schools shall comply with the Code of Ministerial Conduct and the Policy for the Protection of Children and Young People. All other Catholic schools shall adopt policies with respect to the protection of children and young people that comply with state law.
- B. **Academic Excellence.** Academic excellence is central to the mission of all Catholic schools.
- C. **Compliance with State Standards.** All Catholic schools shall adhere to the state standards for non-public schools as established by the State of New Hampshire and its Department of Education, including the standards and requirements for non-public schools regarding safety and attendance.

Procedures for Recognition

A school that seeks recognition by the Bishop of Manchester as a "Catholic" school must submit to the Superintendent of Schools of the Diocese of Manchester documentation regarding how the school will adhere to the standards on Catholic identity, academic excellence, and the state standards set forth above. Included with the school's application should be the following documents:

1. A letter requesting that the Roman Catholic Bishop formally recognize the School as "Catholic." Included in this request must be a statement that the owners, board of trustees, or other governing body agree to safeguard the prerogatives of the Bishop as delineated in the Code of Canon Law, including, but not limited to, Catholic identity and religious education. The letter must also be signed by and reflect the agreement of the governing body of the school to comply with the document entitled "Catholic School Recognition by the Roman Catholic Bishop of Manchester," as amended from time to time.
2. A copy of the civil Articles of Agreement or Incorporation of the school and/or its governing body.
3. A copy of the Constitution and/or By-laws of the school and/or its governing body.
4. A copy of statutes or any other governing documents of the school.

5. Additional documentation regarding how the school will adhere to the standards on Catholic identity, academic excellence, and the state standards set forth above.

The Bishop of Manchester will determine and communicate to the school in a written document his decision as to whether the school shall be recognized as a "Catholic" school. The Superintendent of Schools will advise and monitor the school in complying with the standards set forth herein. Recognition may be withdrawn by the Bishop of Manchester if a school fails to comply with the standards. Generally, a school will be given the opportunity to address and remedy any concerns with respect to its compliance with the standards.

This policy with respect to Catholic school recognition may be amended by the Roman Catholic Bishop of Manchester at any time. The schools will be notified in writing of any changes within 30 days after adoption and will be informed of the date by which compliance with the amendments must be accomplished.

Schools that no longer wish to use the name "Catholic" must inform the Superintendent of Schools of the Diocese of Manchester in writing at least 90 days in advance.