



Right Reverend Patrick Joseph McKinney

Bishop of Nottingham

Pastoral Letter for Education Sunday 2023

**appointed to be read at Sunday Masses celebrated in the Diocese of Nottingham
on Saturday 9th and Sunday 10th September 2023**

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

This Sunday, 10th September, marks the 175th celebration of Education Sunday for the Church in England and Wales. Education Sunday, coinciding with the beginning of the academic year, provides our Catholic community with the opportunity to celebrate the vital work of education that our schools carry out. It also gives me an occasion, on behalf of us all, to acknowledge the sterling work and commitment of thousands of teachers, support staff, governors, and directors, alongside our Diocesan Education Service. They all play such a crucial role in making our Catholic schools among the most successful in the country.

Here in our diocese, it is now five years since the creation of our Catholic Multi-Academy Trusts. During this time, working always in collaboration with our Diocesan Education Service, the Trusts have provided a sense of structure, support, and stability for our schools. I know that this close partnership between the schools in the Trusts was particularly welcome during the challenges of the Covid pandemic. It has also helped to underpin the distinctive nature of our Catholic schools: as places to assist parents in the education and religious formation of their children, where Christ and the teachings of the Catholic Church are at the heart of everything, and where each young person is treasured and encouraged to achieve their full potential.

Over those years I have used my Pastoral Letters on Education to appeal for volunteers from our parish communities to act as both foundation directors and foundation governors. I would like to repeat this request today. The roles of foundation directors and governors are different, but both are very important. Each of them play a part in helping me, as diocesan bishop, to ensure that our Trusts and schools remain faithful to the mission of the Church, and that they are governed effectively.

Foundation directors sit on the Board of each Catholic Multi-Academy Trust; they are company directors and must act in accordance with both company and charity law, in addition to Church Law. Here, I would welcome applications from parishioners who have a suitable background in areas such as finance, law, personnel, marketing, and education. Each of our schools also has a local governing body which is responsible for Catholic Life and academic standards, and foundation governors also ensure that school and parish links remain strong. This role is not solely for those who have a

knowledge of education. Our local governing bodies need to have committed Catholics, from all walks of life, who wish to support Catholic education in their local area. I am aware that, each year, we lose a number of experienced and committed foundation governors who have reached the end of their term of office. I would ask these governors to consider offering their skills to a nearby Catholic school.

These roles may seem a little daunting, especially to those with little recent experience of schools. But I assure you that there is excellent training and support for foundation governors and directors, given by our Diocesan Education Service. Please don't let a sense of the unknown stop you from offering yourself for either of these roles. Jesus often tells his disciples: 'do not be afraid'! I dare to ask all this because the continued support of committed Catholic governors and directors is simply invaluable! Please consider contacting our Diocesan Education Service to find out more.

In our Gospel today, Jesus makes this wonderful promise to us:

'Where two or three meet in my name, I shall be there with them.' (Matthew 18:20)

The great desire of Jesus is to be close to us. Here, in Mass today, Jesus draws intimately close to us in the gift of himself in the eucharist. He invites each of us to enter into a personal relationship with him, a relationship of love which is to grow and deepen and to be shared with others. As we each encounter his love, so we hear his call to follow him in the way we live our lives. Today I rejoice in the fact that those working in the schools across our diocese are doing a wonderful job in supporting each young person to grow in their personal relationship with Jesus, and to be attentive to the ways in which Jesus is calling them to be his active disciples. Saint John Bosco, the great patron saint of young people and of education, once said: 'without confidence and love, there can be no true education.' It has been a great joy for me, after the pandemic, to resume my visits to our diocesan schools. I see there, at first-hand, children and young people who are joyful in their love of Jesus, growing in personal confidence, generous in their service of others, optimistic about the future, and who are being helped to become the men and women whom God has created them to be. This gives me great hope for the future of our diocese.

On this 175th Education Sunday, confident that Jesus is, as he promised, truly with us, let us give thanks for all those people who, over the years, have heard and responded to his call to support the children and young people in our diocesan schools, as headteachers, teachers, support staff, foundation directors and governors. May more and more committed Catholics hear the invitation to take up these wonderful ministries in the service of the young people in our diocesan schools.

With my prayers and blessing to you all,

+ Patrick

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