

CONSULTATION

**A GREEN PAPER ON THE VISION, FUNCTION,
STRUCTURE AND POSSIBLE FINANCING OF
LE CHÉILE,
A NEW TRUST FOR CATHOLIC SCHOOLS.**

JANUARY 2005

ISSUED AS PART OF A CONSULTATIVE PROCESS

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INTRODUCTION

New insights into the governance of education are leading many religious congregations to consider new models for trusteeship to ensure the future of Catholic education in their schools. Le Chéile, A Catholic Schools Trust is a possible future direction, where a number of congregations come together to form a joint Trust for their schools. The exploratory work for this Trust has taken place with fourteen different congregations. Each of these congregations is committed to ensuring that the founding vision that inspired their schools will continue into the future. They are seeking the best way to commit the resources at their disposal to ensuring that future.

To date, the trustee congregations have met to explore current practices among the different trustees and the possibility of setting up a collaborative trust for the future. In May, 2004 there was a preliminary consultation with the schools involved, where chairpersons of Boards of Management and Principals met and discussed some of the issues involved in this new Trust. This document, published as a Green Paper, reflects some of the issues raised at meetings, and possible ways forward to meet the needs expressed in these meetings.

At this stage, we wish to move to a wider consultation on the possible structure and function of this Trust. Through 2005, we hope to widen the consultation to school staffs and to parents. We hope to set up cluster meetings to hear views and suggestions on the future. We are also inviting comments from interested parties on possible directions for the future Trust. If you have any comments, we invite you to forward them in writing to David Tuohy S.J., who is acting as consultant to the current trustees. His address is at the foot of the page.

At this stage, no final decisions have been made on the shape of the collaborative trust, and we hope that, with your help over the next two years, a new structure will emerge that will be a creative force in facing the challenge of maintaining the excellent work that goes in the schools. We hope to be in a position to publish a more concrete proposal as a White Paper early in 2006, with firm proposals going to the Congregational Leadership Teams mid-2006.

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1. THE ROLE OF THE TRUST

Le Chéile, A Catholic Schools Trust, is set up to manage the trustee responsibilities of the congregations who subscribe to Le Chéile in regard to specific schools nominated by these congregations.

The role of the Trust is:

- To safeguard and enhance the Catholic Ethos of each school by supporting and empowering each school to promote its ethos in line with the tradition it inherited.
- To provide assurance to the founding trustees that the schools will maintain their foundation ethos.
- To provide assurance to parents and other stakeholders on the Catholic Ethos of the schools.
- To ensure that the faith formation that takes place in the schools is linked with the church community by respecting the role of parents as the first educators of their children and also by encouraging links with the local diocese and parish.

The functions of the Trust include:

- Responsibility for the characteristic spirit (ethos) of the schools.
- Responsibility for the property, ensuring that resources are used for the intentions for which they were entrusted.
- To ensure compliance with the financial and legal responsibilities of Trustees arising from the Education Act, and also with regard to other management, personnel and policy issues related to school development.

The main work of managing the school is carried out by individual Boards of Management on behalf of the Trustees. The Trust seeks to develop a relationship with the Board of Management that:

- Monitors and ensures the Board's responsibilities to the trustees as operated through the characteristic spirit (ethos) of the school, and the management of resources entrusted for the development of the school.
- Provides expert service to the Boards of Management for the development of the schools, especially by ensuring links with management resources that facilitate development.
- Creates and promotes a spirit of dialogue and cooperation between all schools in the Trust, in a spirit of mutual support.

The Trust is the representative body for the schools committed to it.

- It negotiates on behalf of all these schools with the Trustee Representative Body (representing all Catholic schools) and with any body where there is an effect on a number of schools within the Trust.
- It negotiates with the Department of Education and Science on behalf of individual schools, in the same way that individual congregations would have supported their schools.

2. VISION

A principal aim of Le Chéile is

- to safeguard the future of Catholic Education as an option within the Irish education system
- to help the schools attached to the Trust to develop the highest level of service to the students in the schools, and by extension to their parents, the local and national community.
- To be an advocate for the schools both in terms of the general vision for which the schools stand, and for the individual good of each school.

To this end, Le Chéile seeks to make explicit its understanding of the values underlying Catholic education at this time, and also to develop a vision for the work of the Trust in keeping that vision alive and developing it.

2.1. VISION FOR CATHOLIC EDUCATION

Catholic education is based on a vision of the human person:

A human being has a dignity and a greatness exceeding that of all other creatures; a work of God that has been elevated to the supernatural order as a child of God, and therefore having both a divine origin and an eternal destiny which transcend this physical universe. (The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School, 56: cf. Gaudium et Spes, 12,14,17,22)

It acknowledges the personal development of each individual in the school community (ancillary staff, parents, principal, students, teachers) and the cultural context in which they live.

The Catholic school finds its true justification in the mission of the Church; it is based on an educational philosophy in which faith, culture and life are brought into harmony. (The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School, 34)

Therefore, Catholic education and Catholic schools embody the following values in a way appropriate to the culture of the time:

- An inclusive school that welcomes all who wish to benefit from the values of the school. It seeks to integrate all students into the life of the school. It celebrates different traditions and cultures and believes that it learns about God's work in the world through dialogue with, and understanding of, different cultures.
- A focus on the holistic development of the student. The education promoted helps young people to develop their human qualities; to explore the meaning of their development within the context of the gospel message and to be supported and nurtured in that development. The school promotes excellence in achievement but also helps people appreciate their own weakness and vulnerability.
- The school has a staff where the majority of teachers work from a deeply Christian motive in their identity as teachers and this motivation informs their

approach to students, parents and one another. The school provides opportunities for teachers to grow both professionally and personally.

- Parents (the primary educators), and school work in partnership. Parents find support for their own roles in the development of the young person, especially in their spiritual formation. This includes opportunities for involvement in school life, and for growth opportunities for them as individuals in their roles as parents.
- The school develops a caring community that responds to the curricular and pastoral needs of each person, giving an atmosphere of peace and security in which they can explore, without fear, their emerging identity as young adults.
- The school has a special responsibility for the development of excellence in the Faith Formation Programme in the school. This includes the Religious Education Programme; the general pastoral care of the student within the school and extra-curricular activities that promote service to others and a sense of solidarity with those who are less well off. It also helps students to celebrate the different aspects of their lives through liturgy and ritual.
- The school is also in partnership with the local parish and diocese and promotes the link between the faith life of the school and the faith life of the wider church community.

2.2. VISION FOR THE TRUST

In setting up schools, the founding congregations were responding to the Gospel call to “Go forth and teach all nations”. The Le Chéile Trust seeks to be faithful to that gospel mandate in promoting the work of each individual school within the Trust.

To fulfil the legal obligations of Trustees with regard to schools, the Trust shall

- Monitor that the use of resources (especially Land and capital endowments) are maintained and used for the purpose for which they were entrusted. (Section 3)
- Appoint and support Boards of Management in the schools that have the capacity to develop the schools to the highest level. (Section 4)
- Ensure the proper management of the schools in terms of the development and implementation of policies consistent with the Catholic character of the school; and ensure the financial viability of each school, as well as other duties and responsibilities legally required of Trustees and appropriate to their role as Trustees. (Section 5)

To support the development of Catholic Education in the schools committed to the trust, the Trust shall

- Monitor key issues related to Catholic Education in the schools.
- Help schools develop the Catholic aspect of the schools by linking the schools with opportunities for those in leadership positions, teachers, parents and students to reflect on the Catholic Ethos of the school and the implications for development.
- Ensure that schools have access to help in developing policies that embody the Catholic character of the school.

- By encouraging individual schools to preserve key aspects of the heritage they have received from the founding congregation.

To promote a spirit of partnership in the operation of the Trust that ensures:

- Faithfulness to the heritage of Catholic Education.
- Excellence in the development of the schools.
- A sense of community and Church among all who belong to the Trust.

Commentary

The support role of the Trust, and its role in developing partnership, is outlined in more detail in Section 6 of this Green Paper. In particular, the monitoring role of the Trust is to be understood in a supportive and developmental way.

Monitoring refers to awareness of how developments such as government policy, Church teaching or other demographic changes on a local level might impact on the Catholic school. The Trust would aim to develop support structures for the schools in the light of any developments. In particular, this awareness would clarify the advocacy role of the Trust on behalf of the schools.

A second element of monitoring relates to the stewardship role of the Trust. Many congregations attached to the Trust have a small number of schools. They have exercised their trusteeship in a close, family-style relationship. They have had personnel presence in the schools. In many cases, issues relating to the “ethos” of the school have been handled on an intuitive basis. In the new Trust, there is a need to develop a more formal approach to this role. This formality should help the school to be clear about the expectations of the Trust. In monitoring progress towards the vision, the needs of the school should also emerge, allowing the Trust to prioritise support in a focused way.

To this end, the Trust is committed to work out, in collaboration with key stakeholders in Catholic Education, a set of indicators that clarify for the school what is expected of it. It also allows the school reflect on its own performance through self-evaluation, and to report to the Trust on issues arising for the school in responding to the vision.

In the spirit of stewardship, the Trust may also develop approaches of external visitation to the schools with a view to helping schools in the process of reflection on and implementation of the vision of Catholic education.

In developing the support role, Le Chéile does not want to duplicate unnecessarily the resources that are present elsewhere. It therefore seeks to set up strategic partnerships with other bodies that support the aims of Catholic education. The partnership role outlines three main areas of partnership:

- The Catholic heritage dimension embraces partnership with other Catholic Education Trusts (through CORI), and its links with the Bishops. It also looks to promoting partnership at a local level, through links with the local parish and diocese.

- The focus on excellence embraces partnership with the government in terms of the development of the national education system. It is recognised that the Department of Education and Science, along with other bodies such as JMB and AMCSS also offer support for the excellence of schools.
- Clearly, there will also be a high level of expertise within the schools in the Trust, and a spirit of partnership and collaboration within the Trust will facilitate learning about best practice from one another.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. What enthuses you about the vision of Catholic Education as expressed here?
2. What would you like to add, if anything?
3. How can we involve the whole school community in identifying with the vision and making it their own?
4. Do you think this is a realistic vision for the future?

3. TRUST OF PROPERTY

The Le Chéile Trust manages the property entrusted to individual Congregations for the foundation and running of schools.

In general, each property committed under the Trust will be treated as a wholly owned subsidiary of the Trust. Therefore each property will be managed in such a way that it does not make demands on or endanger any other property committed to the Trust, nor can it make claims against any of these other properties.

3.1. INCORPORATION OF PROPERTY

The Le Chéile Trust sets up an agreement with each congregation on the way in which the property attached to each individual school is to be entrusted to the Trust.

Respecting the way in which individual properties are entrusted to the Congregations under the law of the land and under Canon Law, the property may be:

- Wholly transferred to the Le Chéile Trust, which then takes over the obligations of the Congregation to which the property was originally entrusted. The Le Chéile Trust would then become legally and canonically liable for ensuring the trust.
- Transferred through a licence agreement by the Congregation to the Le Chéile Trust in such a way that the Le Chéile Trust manages the property on behalf of the Congregation, and reports on its stewardship of that property to the congregation. In this agreement, the Trustee may reserve particular decisions to itself.

The Agreement of Transfer of Property from a Congregation to the Trust, whether as a permanent transfer or by licence, requires a clear statement of:

- The purpose of the original trust for which the property was given to the founding Congregation.
- The relationship between the Trust and the Founding Congregation with regard to the property in the event of any alienation of the property through closure of a school or the amalgamation of the school with another school.
- The incorporation of any resources that may be acquired in the future by individual schools by way of endowment or purchase.
- How decisions on capital development for the future are to take place, especially if new buildings are to be erected, or if any property is to be used as collateral against a loan.

The role of the Trust in relation to property is a role of stewardship, whereby it preserves the resources for the purpose of which they were entrusted, and ensures that the resources are applied as they were intended. However, it is also recognised that property can be used as a tool for the development of the school. This requires that there be guidelines for the Trust in the management of property.

3.2. MANAGEMENT OF PROPERTY

Before any property is transferred to the Le Chéile Trust, whether on a permanent basis or by licence, the Trust will set conditions as to standards related to the property. These may include:

- Clarity as to boundaries.
- Clarity as to claims by other parties as to the use of the property (this includes religious communities on or adjacent to the premises of the school and agreements between trustees or school Boards of Management with regard to tenancy rights or use of the property or part of the property.
- Standards as to the state of repair of the property before transfer.
- Agreements with Boards of Management as to responsibilities with regard to the standard of maintenance, and the provision of resources for that maintenance, having due regard to the Articles of Management.

The Le Chéile Trust shall be responsible for all decisions (in accordance with agreed protocols with the congregations) with regard to:

- The alienation of property in order to realise capital funding.
- The use of property as collateral against any loan raised by the school for a legitimate development project.

3.3. DECISIONS ON THE REASSIGNMENT OF PROPERTY

The Le Chéile Trust shall be responsible for all decisions (in accordance with agreed protocols with the congregations) on the use of any properties alienated or diverted from the education apostolate as in the case of amalgamations or closures. These decisions include:

- The claim that an individual congregation will have on such alienated properties for its own use;
- Assigning the benefits of any alienated property to other schools within the trust if they belonged to the same congregation.
- Assigning the benefits of any alienated property to any school within the Trust.
- Assigning the benefits of any alienated property to any other project, in line with the original purpose of the trust.

The aim of the Trust is to manage the legal responsibilities of Trusteeship with regard to property. The Trust will not pursue a management strategy that actively seeks the rationalisation of property or capital as part of a business venture or opportunity. In the case of any such rationalisation arising from demographic changes and negotiated either by the Board of Management of an individual school, or in response to requests from other schools or the Department of Education and Science, the Trust shall:

- Promote the position of the school assigned to the Trust.
- In the case of two schools assigned to the Trust being involved in such negotiations, the Trust will appoint separate personnel to work with the different schools in the negotiation. It will not be the role of the Trust to decide between schools in such a scenario.

4. TRUSTEES AND THE BOARD OF MANAGEMENT.

The relationship between Trustees and Boards of Management is specified in the Articles of Management. This section seeks to promote compliance with this agreement, in the new context where the relationship between the Trust and the Board of Management will probably be on a more formal basis than it was when the individual Congregations acted as direct trustees.

The Board of Management runs the school on behalf of the Trust. The principal and all members of the school community work through the Board of Management. The Trustees have responsibility for appointing the Board and for overseeing its work. In the case of the Board of Management not functioning properly or to the satisfaction of the Trustees, the Trust may dismiss the Board of Management. The Trust will indemnify each member of the Board of Management against any claim for capital debts or expenditure properly incurred (cf. paragraph 28 of Articles of Management)

In light of the responsibility that falls back on the Trustees, it is necessary to ensure that people of high quality are appointed to Boards of Management, and that they are supported in their roles. Particular attention needs to be paid to the appointment of the Chairperson of the Board.

4.1. APPOINTING TRUSTEE REPRESENTATIVES.

It will be the responsibility of the Le Chéile Trust to appoint the Boards of Management of each school in the Trust in accordance with the requirements of the Education Act.

In particular, the Trust will be responsible for the appointment of four Trustee representatives and for the appointment of the Chairperson of the Board.

In nominating the four Trustee Representatives, the Trust will have regard to:

- Members of the founding congregation who are available to serve on the Board of Management.
- Lists provided by the founding congregations of people who have some connection with the school and the congregation, and would be happy to work on the Board.
- Lists of parents or teachers who have served on Boards of individual schools, but not in the capacity of Trustee Representatives, who might be willing to continue their work with the Board.
- Lists of people from different Boards who might be willing to serve on the Board of another school in the Trust, either attached to the same founding Congregation or not.
- Consultation with individual schools as to eligible local representation.

4.2. SUPPORTING BOARD MEMBERS

The trustees will maintain a level of responsibility in ensuring that all members of Boards of Management have access to the necessary resources for carrying out their roles. This will include access to information, legal opinion and also any necessary training in the management role of the Board. Expectations of the level of this practical support must take account of the existing resources at the time.

A key element in the provision of this support will be forging alliances with other bodies, especially other trustees in the Catholic Education sector.

4.3. COMMUNICATION WITH THE BOARD

The Trust will keep regular contact with each Board through the Chairperson or through the Principal, acting as the executive of the Board.

The Trust will respect the role of the Chairperson as designated in the Education Act in developing procedures for communicating with the Board of Management. It will also ensure that regular communications from the Board are channelled through the Chairperson.

The Board of Management will furnish regular reports on the operation of the school to the Trust. In particular, it will furnish;

- a. A copy of the minutes of each Board Meeting
- b. A monthly financial report
- c. An annual report on such issues of policy as directed by the Trust.

4.4. RESPONSIBILITY OF THE BOARD TO THE TRUST

The Board manages the school on behalf of the Trustees. The Board therefore is charged with specific responsibilities:

- a. To ensure that the school is run in a spirit consistent with the values given by the Trust – the Board therefore has responsibility for monitoring these values and for initiating interventions to support and develop appreciation of these values among the school community. In particular, the Board will take a special interest in the faith formation programme of the school as a special concern of the Trustees.
- b. To ensure that the school is compliant with all the legal requirements of the State. To this end, the Board will develop and publish a School Plan as required by the Education Act. It will consult with the Trust on the key implications of the plan for the ethos of the school, and also on any capital or budget implications that might affect the Trust. The Board will also ensure that the school develops all necessary policies with due regard to legal issues as well as the values of the Trustees. These include policies on Admissions, Assignment of Students within school, bullying, consultation with parents, health and safety, discipline.
- c. The Board shall keep the Trust informed of any developments within the school that might impact on their legal responsibilities. These include issues such as

- appeals against the admission policy or against any action taken by the Board to suspend or exclude a student.
- d. The Board shall make available to the Trust any reports of Whole School Evaluation or Subject Inspection from the DES. They shall also indicate how they how they intend to respond to any suggestions made in these reports.
 - e. The Board manages the property for the Trustees. It is the responsibility of the Board to keep the Trust informed of any issues related to possible capital development – either in terms of maintenance or changing needs within the school. The Trustees will also have to plan for provision of capital funding and Boards will need to have due regard for possible time delays, especially in light of the increased number of schools.
 - f. The Board is responsible for the financial management of the school. It is the responsibility of the Board to manage the finances within agreed budgets. To this end, the Board submits an annual budget to the Trust and works from an approved budget. It submits regular reports on financial issues and works to remain within budget limits. The Board ensures that the Trust does not incur debts arising from the operation of the school.
 - g. The Board appoints full-time personnel within the school. Particularly with the appointment of the Principal or Deputy Principal, the Board will have due regard to consultation with the Trust. It will also ensure that the Trust has sufficient time to appoint its own representative to Selection Committee where appropriate and designated by agreement.

4.5. GRIEVANCES

In the case of a grievance by another party with regard to the operation of the Board of Management, the Trust is the first Court of Appeal. The Trust will have an appeals procedure to deal with any such grievance.

In the case of the Trust having a grievance against the operation of the Board, there is a statutory procedure outlined in the Education Act. The Trust will clarify how such procedures will operate. This will include a specific section on the possible relationship with the founding congregation, especially if the cause of the grievance has to do with ethos issues within the school.

In the case of a Board of Management having a grievance with the Trust, there will be a specific mechanism to deal with this. This will involve internal procedures with different aspects of the governance (see section 7) as well as possible external appeals.

A school, once committed to the Trust by their current trustees, will not be free to leave the Trust without a clear process and approval from the Trust.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. Outline the advantages, for your school, in the relationship that might exist between the new Trust and the Board of Management.
2. Is there anything omitted that you believe would strengthen the relationship?
3. Do you have any concerns or difficulties with this section of the Green Paper?

5. TRUSTEES AND MANAGEMENT SYSTEM.

Although the Trust deal primarily with the Board of Management, it recognises that the historical relationship between the Trustees and the schools involved some visible presence to the staff, and also that trustees provided support to different groups within the school. It is also recognised that a comprehensive support system is not currently in place for those in a leadership position in Catholic schools, particularly around the leadership for ethos.

At least in the transition phase, it is envisaged that the Trust will continue to offer focused support to some areas of management. The aim of this support structure is to develop common approaches to key issues in the schools, and through collaboration, to arrive at best practice.

5.1. FINANCE

It is envisaged that the schools in the Trust will operate a common financial reporting system. This allows easy access to information in each school, and allows for better learning about good practice. This financial management system will be in line with the national reporting norms. It is hoped to develop this mechanism on a pilot basis.

Founding Congregations will no longer give subventions to individual schools on an ad hoc basis. All financial subventions will be negotiated through the Trust. In the case of specific projects that have in the past been supported by Trustees, (e.g. linked with Networks of schools attached to a particular congregation) special funds may be established by the Congregation to be administered by the Trust.

5.2. POLICIES

Schools are required to develop specific policies to conform to legal requirements and other demands of the Department of Education and Science. It is envisaged that the Trust will provide some help in the development of such policies for the immediate future. This will include:

- a. Forum for discussion and debate on policy initiatives.
- b. Providing links on information and resources necessary for the development of the policy.
- c. Guidelines on key value statements and implementation strategies.
- d. Forum for sharing information on good practice between schools.

5.3. MONITORING

As the Trustees are ultimately responsible for the characteristic spirit of the school, the Trust will put in place, through the Board of Management, some key monitoring points on how specific policies are operating. In particular, the Trust will seek to understand how policies impact on the ethos of the school and what is needed to support good practice or to correct imbalances that emerge.

In general, these reviews and evaluations will take place on a cyclical basis and will be linked to the mandatory School Planning process.

5.4. SPECIAL PROJECTS

Congregations may maintain special links with individual schools through specific projects that they support either for schools attached to their ethos, or for all the schools. These may include support schemes for principals to network with other principals in their schools; similar schemes for teachers or pupils; specific projects to encourage reflection on key elements of the Founder's life and values, and the education philosophy promoted in individual schools.

These projects will be coordinated through the Trust, although they may be managed at Congregational level.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. What aspect of this section do you feel will be most helpful to a school?
2. What areas of this section do you think need to be further developed?
3. Are there areas in this section that you think will cause difficulties in schools?
4. Do you have any suggestions for this section?

6. THE SUPPORT ROLE OF THE TRUST

The Trust recognises that the governance of the schools is undertaken in partnership with the Government. The government interprets political issues with regard to education provision. They set boundaries on the rights of all stakeholders in line with the common good, as understood at any particular time.

The government takes responsibility for the national education policy, which includes decisions on curricular provision, assessment policies, funding, access and retention. As well as setting policy, government also funds these policies both at a fiscal level and also in providing access to in-service and other resources.

The goals of Catholic education, as supported by the Trust, will include all minimum requirements as stipulated by national policy. However, there are other areas of school life that will be particular to Catholic schools and which may not be supported directly by government. The Trust is committed to identify such key areas and developing support mechanisms for them.

6.1. FAITH DEVELOPMENT

A key element of the Catholic School is the development of the faith life of the community. The Trustees have a special regard for this element of the life of the school. It is unlikely that this area will be supported, (as might other areas of school life), by government initiatives.

The faith life of the school is focused in part on the formal RE programme. A key concern of the Trust will be that each school makes adequate provision for the development of a meaningful RE programme through the appointment of trained catechists, the acquisition of resources to support the programme and regular reviews of the programmes and their impact.

However, the faith life of the school also involves informal opportunities to experience both the transcendence of God and solidarity with humankind, especially those less well off than ourselves. In this regard, the Trust will seek to develop reflection on approaches to developing a supportive Catholic ethos in the school, and then seeking to actively support the development of that ethos. This will include areas such as:

- a. Opportunities for Staff Members to grow spirituality.
- b. Opportunities for Parents to understand their own faith and in particular their role in supporting the faith development of their children in an age-appropriate manner.
- c. Opportunities for Students to experience different aspects of the Church community either through prayer experience (retreats) or social action.
- d. Chaplaincy services where the community experiences meaningful liturgy and para-liturgy

- e. Pastoral care, where members of the school community experience the basic acceptance and human respect necessary as a context for their own development.

6.2. IN-SERVICE AND PERSONAL SUPPORT

In general, the Trust does not see itself as a provider of basic in-service. There are other organisations that support the professional training and development of people involved in education – in management, pastoral care and classroom teaching. Insofar as possible, the Trust would hope to form partnerships with such organisations to ensure that key concerns of the Trust can be incorporated into regular training and in-service programmes.

Specifically, the Trust will seek to provide opportunities to reflect on the Catholic ethos of the school where such opportunities do not occur naturally. In particular, the Trust will seek to support all those in leadership roles (Principals, Deputy Principals and Middle Management) to explore the development of ethos from their own personal perspectives as well as the professional implications for school organisation and practice.

The Trust will seek to coordinate a sense of community among all the schools of the Trust by providing opportunities for sharing experiences and joint ventures. This wider community will be seen as a source of inspiration and collaboration, as well as providing mutual support.

The community dimension will be explored at leadership level, among teachers, students and parents. It is envisaged that the wider community will provide greater opportunities to develop projects because of the “economy of scale” involved.

In particular, the Trust will focus support on key issues related to faith development as part of the process of clarifying vision and developing a strategic plan for the Trust.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

The Trust is committed to identify key value areas and to developing support mechanisms for them.

1. How can the Trust work with schools to identify these key areas?
2. How do you think the new Trust will support individuals and their needs into the future?

7. STRUCTURE OF THE TRUST

In developing a structure for the Le Chéile Trust, the Trustees are conscious of a number of complex issues. One of these is the need to be faithful to a tradition and to guard the values that have been handed down. This needs to be done in a living way. This gives rise to the need for an expert group who will service key elements of the Trust, enabling the Trust to respond to issues affecting the school – social change, education policy, etc. The Trustees also recognise the spirit of partnership that has developed in the schools, especially over the past 10 years. They recognise the right of the school community to a voice in any deliberations about governance and wish to enshrine that in a formal structure.

These reflections gave rise to the possibility of a threefold structure in the governance of the Trust.

- The Trustee Council – to act as stewards of the Trust.
- The Education Office – to provide expert advice and service
- The Le Chéile Forum – to provide a voice for those involved in the Trust at school level.

7.1. STEWARDSHIP – THE TRUSTEE COUNCIL

To preserve the stewardship function of the Trustees, it is proposed to set up a Trustee Council. This will consist of one nominated representative from each of the Congregations involved in the Trust. This Trustee Council will meet at least once a year. It will select its own chairperson and executive and will develop a protocol for rotation of roles. Initially, the delegate to this Trustee Council will be a member of the Congregation, but after three years, Congregations may appoint lay people to represent them at this level if they wish.

The Trustee Council will oversee the work of the Trust. They will receive a report on the operation of the Trust and will approve a strategic programme of work for the Education Office.

The Trustee Council will approve policy developments that apply to the schools. The Trustee Council may develop protocols whereby individual congregations may reserve particular decisions regarding ethos or practice to themselves.

The Trustee Council will approve a budget for the Trust in line with the agreed mechanism for funding the Trust.

The Trustee Council will be the final arbiters of appeals to the Trust.

7.2. EXPERT – THE EDUCATION OFFICE.

The Trust will maintain an Education Office to support the work of the Trust. The officers in the Education Office will:

- Support the Trustee Council by preparing an annual report on the working of the Trust; preparing a Budget for their approval; prepare briefing documents on policy issues to facilitate decision-making.
- In preparation for the annual report, the education office will monitor the financial management of individual schools; evaluate the implementation of key policies in the schools, especially with regard to ethos; respond to specific needs and concerns of the schools; organise supports and resources for the development of the Catholic Ethos of the schools.
- Support the Le Chéile Forum by preparing briefing documents on policy issues to facilitate debate and decision-making.
- Represent the Trustee Council and the Le Chéile Forum in the political arena where necessary. In general, the officers will act as advocates for the Trust and will represent the Trust in Network meetings where appropriate.

7.3. DEMOCRACY – THE LE CHÉILE FORUM

The Le Chéile Forum consists of representatives of each of the schools involved in the Trust. Each school will send two representatives to the Forum. These will normally be the Chairperson of the Board of Management and the Principal. Provision may also be made for representation of teachers and parents.

The Forum will decide on its own structure – an executive, etc.

The Forum would meet at least twice a year. The purpose of the meeting will be to debate key issues relating to policy affecting all schools in the Trust, and to take decisions relating to policy. The Forum may request help from the Education Office in the preparation of briefing documents.

The Forum is also a means whereby schools can raise issues of concern to their own operation. The Forum is therefore a means of the schools advocating for themselves.

7.4. LINKAGES

The Trust will draw up a formal protocol of linkages between the three governance elements. In particular, it will have due regard to mechanisms for dealing with conflict over policy issues between the Trustee Council and the Forum. It will also look at a protocol for assigning work to the Education Office by the Council and the Forum, and for agreeing a schedule of that work.

8. FINANCING THE TRUST

The Trust needs to be set up on a firm financial basis. The following areas have been indicated as possible sources.

1. The Trustees set up a Trust Fund that generates income for the operation of the Trust.
2. That the schools contribute to the running of the Trust through a fixed contribution or “Licence Fee” calculated on a per capita basis. Some schools already have protocols in place for this.
3. That finance be sought from the government to support the work carried out at Trust level.
4. That some of the functions of the Education Office be self-financing or income generating.
5. Seeking sponsorship for the Trust from Philanthropic sources.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. In what way do you think the threefold structure outlined in section 7 promotes a sense of partnership in governance?
2. How do you see these structures contributing to involvement in the Christian education of young people?
3. With regard to finance, what would the school’s expectations be of the Trust in return for the contribution made to Le Chéile through the Licence Fee or its equivalent?