



# Síol Schools Trust Statement of Strategy 2025–2028

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# Introduction

On behalf of the board, I am delighted to welcome the publication of the Síol Schools Trust Statement of Strategy 2025–2028, which will inform and shape the strategic direction and work of the Board over the next three years and beyond.

Our mission is to promote Catholic education as an option within the Irish Education system and to support, develop and endow Le Chéile Schools Trust in their work in the development of Catholic education.

The work of both Trusts is inextricably linked and this Statement of Strategy reflects the collaborative approach and close alignment of the strategic planning process in both organisations.

Our Statement of Strategy 2025–2028 reflects their valuable work in the consultation phase and their input is reflected in this document. I would like to thank everyone who participated.

The planning process included important conversations among our board and with our stakeholders (including our sixteen religious congregations) and was overseen by the Board's Governance working group. This collaboration has enabled us to determine our strategic goals and future direction, while considering the challenges and opportunities ahead.

The Síol Schools Trust strategic priorities incorporate reflections on the context in which we operate and how we will most effectively achieve our vision.

To facilitate achieving the four strategic priorities in this document, over the next three years the Board will:

- Work to our shared set of values.
- Ensure the Trust has the operational capacity to implement the actions required.
- Operate effectively to the highest governance standards.

Over the course of this plan, our strategic vision and priorities demonstrate our continued commitment to support and develop Le Chéile Schools Trust. I am confident that the collaborative process undertaken in the development of this plan will secure the support and advocacy necessary for its successful implementation.

The nature of the Irish education sector is rapidly changing. The strategic context within which our Trust operates is a complex one, with many challenges for Patrons and Trustees. The board of Síol Schools Trust will remain agile in order to respond to future circumstances over the next three years and beyond. Consequently our strategy will remain flexible to be adjusted to cater for unknown changes in the educational environment that may arise.

Síol Schools Trust will continue to look outwards, to seek to shape and influence the development of policy and practice for Patrons and Trustees in collaboration with our external sectorial partners.

Through our strategic relationships with key stakeholders in education, our communication strategy will remain consistent with our mission, vision and values.

Susan Bryson, Chairperson  
Síol Schools Trust



# 1. Background to the Statement of Strategy

## Le Chéile Education Trust

Síol Schools Trust and Le Chéile Schools Trust together comprise Le Chéile Education Trust.

The main object of Le Chéile Schools Trust is the advancement of education, in particular supporting the development of Catholic education in accordance with Catholic ethos, overseeing its implementation in the Schools and encouraging preservation of key aspects of the evangelical heritage of their founders, as enshrined in the Charter. In the case of multi-denominational schools, promoting the integration of human and spiritual values of care, respect, community, inclusion, equality, justice and fairness in a characteristic spirit that respects Catholic values and traditions. In both cases, by carrying out the role of patron, joint-patron and/or trustee of the Schools, and, if possible, facilitating the opening of new schools if and where the need arises and resources permit.

The mission of Síol Schools Trust is to promote Catholic education as an option within the Irish education system and to support, develop and endow Le Chéile Schools Trust in their work to support the development of Catholic education.

The work of both Trusts is inextricably linked, and this Statement of Strategy reflects that relationship and close alignment. Many of our goals and key actions are critically connected, and staff of the Le Chéile Schools Trust contribute directly to the work of Síol Schools Trust.

## Síol Schools Trust

Síol Schools Trust oversees the implementation of its mission with care and respect, and encourages preservation of key aspects of the evangelical heritage of their founders as enshrined in the foundational Charter.

Síol holds the assets, investments and funds contributed by the congregations, including any school site or other property vested in it, on trust with the purpose of financially supporting and funding the Le Chéile Schools Trust.

Síol Schools Trust funds the annual operational budget for Le Chéile Schools Trust. Le Chéile school properties are licensed to the Trust and it oversees the management of the property assets of the Trust.

The board oversees the investment fund set up by the Congregations and manages a sustainable funding model for Le Chéile Schools Trust in their support of the schools into the future.

# Role of Síol Schools Trust as Trustee

Le Chéile Schools Trust is supported by Síol Schools Trust to undertake the legal, financial and inspirational role of patronage and trusteeship of Le Chéile schools. The statutory functions of patrons and trustees have been summarised by the Association of Patrons and Trustees of Catholic Schools (APTCS) as follows:

STATUTORY FUNCTIONS OF PATRONS	SOURCE OF AUTHORITY
Registering as a patron	Education Act 1998 (S8)
Requesting recognition of a school	Education Act 1998 (S8)
Opening new schools	Private decision or Department of Education (DE) process
Closing schools	Private and/or DE decision
Amalgamations	Articles of Management
Change of status (fee-charging/non fee charging; single sex/co-ed)	Articles of Management
Enrolment numbers	Private ownership of property
Appointing (or dissolving) a Board of Management	Education Act 1998 (S14 and 16) / Articles of Management
Determining the characteristic spirit of the school	Education Act 1998 (S15)
Receiving reports from the Board of Management	Eductaion Act 1998 (S15)
Overseeing school finances	Articles of Management (Art15) and Education Act 1998 (S18)
Appointing Principals and Deputy Principals (with Board of Management)	Articles of Management
Engaging with the DE Inspectorate in Whole School Evaluations and other Inspections	Education Act 1998 (introduction)
Approving Admission Policies	Education (Admission to Schools) Act 2018
Approving Child Protection and Safeguarding Policies	Child Protection Act 2015
Approving grant applications	Education Act and DE regulations
Approving any alteration to the school property	Education Act and Articles of Management
Entering into lease/licence agreements	Articles of Management (Art15)
Ensuring adequate insurance cover and relevant indemnity	Articles of Management
Compliance with GDPR	GDPR Act 2018
Compliance with Protected Disclosures	Protected Disclosures Act 2014 + amendments
Registration and compliance with Charities Regulatory Authority Governance Code	Charities Act 2009 + amendments
Registration and compliance with Companies Registration Office (if applicable)	Companies Act 2014 + amendments
Registration as a Public Juridic Person (Rome/IEC/Local Bishop)	Canon Law

**Source: APTCS Statement of Strategy 2023-2025**

# Developing the Statement of Strategy

This Statement of Strategy 2025–2028 reflects the collaborative approach and close alignment of the strategic planning process between the Board of Síol Schools Trust and Le Chéile Schools Trust.

The cornerstone for developing this plan was the Síol Schools Trust Strategic Plan 2019–2024. The strategy development process enabled reflection on the progress and achievements over the past five years, and consideration of current and evolving challenges and opportunities facing both Trusts.

The planning process was overseen by the Board’s Governance Working Group and involved a series of conversations among our board, with our stakeholders and other partners:

Le Chéile Schools Trust Board

Le Chéile Schools Trust Executive Team

Chairpersons of Boards of Management

Sixteen Congregations

Association of Patrons and Trustees of Catholic Schools

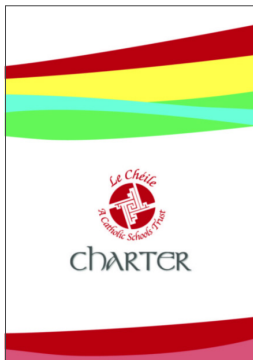
Department of Education

Leaders of other Trusts

External advisors on finance, investments, and property

This collaborative consultation phase, conducted over six months, determined the strategic priorities and future direction of the Statement of Strategy 2025–2028.

# Strategic Context



Internally, the Charter is central to strategic context and to the operation of the Trust. The Charter is a foundational document that offers inspiration and guidance for the work of the Trust. It outlines the original Mission and Vision that the Congregations entrusted to the Trust. It informs the policies and decision-making process of the Board. Externally, the strategic context within which our Trust operates is a complex one, with many challenges for Patrons and Trustees.

In developing this Statement of Strategy, the following important strategic drivers were taken into consideration:



**Political, societal and demographic factors** – driving changes in evolving government policy and procedures; the composition, structure and trajectory of the school system; the realities of patronage and trusteeship; the dynamics of parental choice and its influence on schools.



**Funding and resource pressures** – economic circumstances and underfunding for patron and trustee functions in education places increasing pressure on the Trust.



**The Trust's position among the advocates for Catholic education in the Irish education system** within the wider movement to achieve greater alignment in all aspects of Catholic education.



**Governance regulations and sustainability** – the impact of ensuring full compliance with governance requirements and ensuring long-term sustainable practices are particularly challenging for the ongoing work of a small organisation.



**Developments in technology** – the challenge of keeping pace with rapidly advancing changes in technology is ever-present. The impact of these changes in areas such as organisational adoption / utilisation for data-management efficiencies, training, legislation and cyber-security is considerable.



**Needs of our key stakeholders and partners** – Le Chéile Schools Trust; member Congregations; school Boards of Management, in respect of their responsibility for school property and financial governance; Department of Education, in respect of the oversight and reporting requirements for school property projects.

## 2. Mission, Vision and Values

### Overview

This Statement of Strategy will provide the basis for shaping the strategic direction and work of the Board of Síol Schools Trust from 2025 to 2028.

The context within which the Trust operates includes the strategic drivers that impact on our work, the changing environmental factors for Catholic education in Ireland and abroad, and wider global developments.

These factors and their potential impact on the work of the Trust in the coming years were considered in the development of the strategy.

### Mission

In line with the founding Charter and Constitution, the mission of Síol Schools Trust is:

***“to support the development of Catholic education and to oversee its implementation with care and respect, encouraging preservation of key aspects of the evangelical heritage of the founders.”***

Síol will do this by holding the assets, investments and funds contributed by the Congregations and other constituent organisations, including the sites of any primary or post-primary schools or other property vested in it, on trust to financially support and fund Le Chéile Schools Trust.

Síol Schools Trust also facilitates the opening of new schools and the amalgamation or closure of schools under its remit where the need arises and resources permit.

### Vision

Over the period of this Statement of Strategy, 2025–2028, the vision for Síol Schools Trust is as follows:

***“The Trust’s vision for Catholic education is based upon our Congregations’ heritage, ethos, and contribution to education. It places the human person at the centre of a philosophy of education, in which faith, culture, and life are brought into harmony. This vision is what inspires the work of Catholic education and is open to and welcomes all who share that vision and wish to benefit from it.”***

### Values

The Trust’s ethos is derived from the intentions, beliefs and charisms of the Congregations. This ethos, as articulated in the Charter, is that the agreed purpose, shared values, and the principles of Welcome, Wisdom and Witness find a clear presence and expression in the lived, daily experience in our schools and among those who are involved in the work of the Trust.



# 3. Strategic Priorities

## Overview

Four strategic priorities have been identified and each one will have a significant role in shaping the direction of the work of the Board and our collective effort over the period of 2025–2028.

Each priority has been strategically selected to drive progress and effectiveness across the Trust’s operations, to guide our decision-making and the initiatives we will implement; and to steer us toward fulfilling our mission and shared vision over the next three years.

### Priority 1: Support, Develop and Endow Le Chéile Schools Trust

1

This strategic goal is aimed at creating a lasting impact by providing ongoing support and resourcing to Le Chéile Schools Trust. It involves a comprehensive approach to resourcing and sustaining the work of Le Chéile Schools Trust, to enable the Trust to achieve its mission in Catholic education.

In addition to financial support, advisory resources for Trust operations in the areas of finance, property, compliance, and technology for organisational effectiveness, will also be available. The Board will collaborate with the Le Chéile Board to ensure a funding model to support the Le Chéile Schools Trust Statement of Strategy over the period 2025–2028.

### Priority 2: Oversight of the Maintenance and Development of the Trust’s Schools’ Property

2

This strategic goal involves monitoring and risk assessment of school property in Le Chéile Schools Trust, and oversight of school development work funded by the Department of Education. Management and compliance oversight by Le Chéile Schools Trust of school Boards of Management will be supplemented by the Síol Board jointly overseeing reporting and risk assessment associated with school property development, including financial, legal, and operational risks. Compliance management will ensure that school property development activities comply with legal and regulatory requirements and internal policies.

## 3. Strategic Priorities

3

### **Priority 3: Manage a Sustainable Financial Model for the Trust**

This strategic goal involves investing in future growth and looking beyond immediate needs to plan for the sustainability of the Trust. Through the professional advice of investment managers, the Board will oversee the management of the endowment fund to secure long-term financial stability and manage the ongoing financial viability of the Trust in the medium and long term. Achieving a sustainable model involves strategically assessing the efficiency of the Trust's operations, governance, organisational effectiveness and relevant changes in the wider environment.

4

### **Priority 4: Align Organisational Excellence and Reputational Positioning**

This strategic goal involves implementing best practice processes in order to drive a culture of excellence across all levels of the Trust. Through the implementation of a robust governance structure, the Board ensures that transparency and accountability are key factors in the oversight the Trust's operations. The Board will monitor and evaluate the impact of programmes and initiatives to make data-driven decisions for continuous improvement. Through strategic partnerships with external stakeholders, the Trust will aim to leverage resources and expertise to fulfil its statutory functions.

## 4. Goals and Actions

### Priority 1: Support, Develop and Endow Le Chéile Schools Trust

Strategic goals and actions required for achieving this priority include:

	Goals & Actions
1.1	Effective management of the Trust's endowment funds in order to financially support the operations of Le Chéile Schools Trust.
1.2	Actively manage all Trust funds and the Trust's financial affairs at all times.
1.3	Develop a criteria-based approach and business-case model for board decision making and for evaluating alternate proposals.
1.4	Monitor and evaluate the impact of programmes and initiatives to make data-driven decisions for continuous improvement.

### Priority 2: Oversight of the Maintenance and Development of the Trust's Schools' Property

Strategic goals and actions required for achieving this priority include:

	Goals & Actions
2.1	Provide strategic leadership and oversight for the management of Le Chéile schools' infrastructure.
2.2	Oversee the maintenance and promote the development of the Trust's current school properties to keep pace with best practice in school facilities provision.
2.3	Determine the type, profile, and location of future school properties.
2.4	Risk management of school properties, through the delivery of reporting systems on school property owned or licensed to the Trust.
2.5	Implement policies to ensure risk oversight and the management of all major capital developments in Le Chéile schools.
2.6	Strengthen sustainability (environmental, community and financial) in all areas of the Trust's work including school properties.

## Priority 3: Manage a Sustainable Financial Model for the Trust

Strategic goals and actions required for achieving this priority include:

	Goals & Actions
3.1	Manage a funding model to endeavour to optimise the life of the Trust's funds so that the Trust can continue to meet its charitable purpose into the future.
3.2	Secure financial sustainability by monitoring and effectively measuring funding requirements and identifying a diversity of funding sources.
3.3	Ensure transparency and accountability in the Trust's operations and ensure governance and compliance management permeate the organisation.
3.4	Align with the Board of Le Chéile Schools Trust to ensure a sustainable funding model is in place to fund the multi-year strategies and to identify and mitigate potential risks.

## Priority 4: Align Organisational Excellence and Reputational Positioning

Strategic goals and actions required for achieving this priority include:

	Goals & Actions
4.1	Adhere to the highest standards of governance at all levels in the organisation.
4.2	Utilise digital technologies to achieve efficiencies in all areas of Trust operations including reporting controls.
4.3	Ongoing recognition of our Congregations' heritage, ethos and contribution to Catholic education, and the importance of retaining links with our founding Congregations.
4.4	Establish an Advisory Council, whose members will provide advice to the Board, based on council members' experience and knowledge in the areas of Catholic education, patronage, trusteeship, and property matters.
4.5	Promote and implement policies for best practice to fulfil our statutory role in patronage and trusteeship.
4.6	Strengthen the wider external profile of the Trust as a leading Catholic Trust, through engagement with key stakeholders including school communities, the APTCS, the Department of Education, and other partners in education.

# Conclusion

Since our establishment in 2008, Síol Schools Trust has achieved significant milestones, including securing a permanent education centre for the operation of the Trust, opening two new schools under Le Chéile patronage, and developing important strategic partnerships at a national level. Our dedication to Catholic education remains steadfast and continues to reflect our founding intentions and supports their expression in Irish life today.

Over the years, we have demonstrated adaptability and resilience by successfully navigating significant challenges. The Trust has flourished and grown into a rich network of schools across Ireland. This is as a result of the positive impact and benefits arising from actions within previous strategic plans.

Looking forward, it is envisioned that this Statement of Strategy 2025–2028, will be instrumental in propelling the Trust forward into the next phase of its mission for Catholic education.

Success for Síol Schools Trust is more than achieving our strategic priorities. It means sustaining momentum through meaningful collaboration with State and education partners. It also means focusing on our statutory role and developing a broader understanding of the increasing requirements of patronage and trusteeship. Finally, it means leaving a lasting legacy of positive change.

The Board will ensure that this strategy remains flexible, being adapted as necessary to cater for changes arising in the educational and wider environment. The Board committed to periodic review of this Statement of Strategy to facilitate its continuous improvement and evolution.

With Le Chéile Schools Trust and our key stakeholders we will continue to innovate and collaborate, so that together we achieve the full potential of this Statement of Strategy.





## Síol Schools Trust CLG



Le Chéile Education Centre, Bushy Park House, Templeogue Road, Dublin D6W EH51



[www.lecheiletrust/siol.ie](http://www.lecheiletrust/siol.ie)



[admin@lecheiletrust.ie](mailto:admin@lecheiletrust.ie)



Telephone: 01 5380104

Registered Charity No. 20068554

Company Registration No. 463025

CHY No. 18067