

Definition of a 'Practising Catholic' – Education Key Post requirement.

The term 'Practising Catholic' is used by the Catholic Bishops of England and Wales collectively as a requirement for certain key leadership and teaching posts. In these circumstances, the requirement is that a person applying or appointed to one of these key posts will be a 'practising Catholic' in a way that is much more than the simple and common understanding. Key posts referred to carry a requirement that goes beyond simple membership of the Catholic Church alone or even regular attendance at Mass. Their occupation requires them to participate in a very specific religious way in the mission of the local and universal Catholic Church; they have a duty to collaborate with, and be at the service of, the bishop's mission to govern, teach and sanctify the people of God through the work of education. These religious activities are made provision for in statutory legislation and made explicit in the contracts of employment. Integral to the effectiveness and professionalism of the activities and objectives of these key posts is the exercise of a distinct vocation in the Church.

This demands a fidelity to Christ and the teachings of the Catholic Church. The Church's general obligations for its members require that they strive to live lives of holiness by being faithful to the teaching of the Gospel, by trying to uphold the values proclaimed in the Beatitudes, by assisting in the Church's mission to make Christ known to all peoples, by upholding privately and publicly the Church's moral and social teaching, by endeavouring to follow an informed conscience and by making every effort to keep the precepts of the Church. This is the 'practice' of the Catholic Faith in its widest and all-encompassing sense.

Therefore, for appointment as a member of the governing authority of a Catholic school or to key posts within the school, a 'practising Catholic' is to be defined as someone who has been sacramentally initiated into the Catholic Church and who adheres to those substantive life choices which do not impair them from receiving the sacraments of the Church and which will not be in any way detrimental or prejudicial to the religious ethos and character of the school. Inspired by the Gospel and sustained by God's grace, a 'practising Catholic' will give sincere external expression to their interior faith through specific religious, moral and ethical behaviour which is in accordance with the teaching of Christ and the Catholic Church

This does not mean that a 'practising Catholic' has to be 'perfect'. The process for appointment to key posts within the school is not, nor should it ever be used as, an appraisal of an applicant's spiritual and moral successes or failures. A 'practising Catholic', no matter how strong their faith in Christ or firm in their commitment to the Church and its teaching, will almost certainly not be a 'perfect' Catholic. Rather, assessment of a person's suitability must be objectively based on the requirement for the office or post to be held by a 'practising Catholic' as defined in the section above. The only evidence to be taken into consideration in that assessment is of the substantive life choices that they are known to have made and adhere to, both in the personal and public forum; and whether or not those choices are compatible with the teaching of the Catholic Church. This will be evidenced by the reference from the priest and through the interview process.

Further information or detail can be found in 'Christ at the Centre' by Bishop Marcus Stock