

# Catholic Education in Malta

The Mission of Church  
Schools in Maltese Society  
Today and Tomorrow



**SECRETARIAT FOR  
CATHOLIC EDUCATION**



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# Catholic Education in Malta

## The Mission of Church Schools in Maltese Society Today and Tomorrow

“Constellations reflect their own light in an infinite universe. As in a kaleidoscope, their colours intermingle, creating further chromatic variations. This is what happens in Catholic educational institutions, which are open to meeting and listening to civil society, political and administrative authorities, as well as representatives of the productive sectors and professional categories. They are required to collaborate even more actively with them in order to share and improve educational pathways so that the theory may be supported by experience and practice. History also teaches that our institutions welcome students and families who do not believe or who profess other faiths, but who desire a truly human education. For this reason – as is already the case – we must continue to promote participatory educational communities, in which lay people, religious, families and students share responsibility for the educational mission, together with public and private institutions.”<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Leo XIV, Apostolic Letter *Drawing New Maps of Hope* (27 October 2025), 8.3.

This document, published on the 13th May 2026, is being endorsed by the Maltese Episcopal Conference, Rev. Fr Eric Cachia SDB, President of Conference of Major Religious Superiors (KSMR), Rev. Dr Mark Ellul, Delegate for Catholic Education and Mr Stephen Cachia, Chair of Church Schools Association (CSA).

The Implementation and Coordination Committee on the Future of Church Schools was chaired by Rev. Fr Jimmy Bartolo SJ, representing the CSA, with the membership of Rev. Fr Colin Sammut OFMConv and Rev. Fr Leslie Gatt OSA on behalf of KSMR, Dr Ian Mifsud and Ms Angela Charles on behalf of Secretariat for Catholic Education (SfCE) and Mr Stephen Cachia also on behalf of CSA.

The Working Group on Identity was chaired by Rev. Fr Eric Cachia SDB, with membership comprising Mr Bernard Cauchi, Sr Alexandra Chircop FCJ, Prof Nadia Delicata, Rev. Fr Clinton Farrugia MSSP, Sr Rachel Frendo OSA, Rev. Fr Charles Sultana and Ms Mariella Vella.

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# Introduction

Church Schools<sup>2</sup> are historically known to have been pivotal in establishing formal education in Malta and Gozo, and they continue to be widely recognised as very important contributors to this critical aspect of Maltese society. The identity of Church Schools is known to be imbued with their common Catholic roots and underpinning values. Although this may have sufficed and satisfied past needs, the rapidly changing context, which offers endless opportunities to its community amidst challenged norms and uncertainty, requires elucidation of the intended identity of Church Schools for Malta and Gozo of today and tomorrow.

As part of a coordinated effort from the larger project on The Future of Church Schools started by the Church Schools Association (CSA), the Secretariat for Catholic Education (SfCE), and the Conference of Major Religious Superiors (KSMR), with support from the Maltese Episcopal Conference, a consultation process began with Discern to conduct a study that looks at what different people think about the Future of Maltese Church Schools. Research on identity, formation and governance in church schools was conducted in 2023. It consisted of focus groups with CSA and KSMR, and one-to-one semi-structured interviews with the majority of heads of schools and provincials (or their equivalents) responsible for the running of the schools within the congregation. This resulted in the publication of a revised document, 'The Future of Church Schools' in 2024. Amongst action plans emanating from this document, the Implementation & Coordination Committee on the Future of Church Schools decided to focus on the theme of Identity. An ad-hoc Working Group on Identity was established

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<sup>2</sup> Church Schools are specified institutions (listed in Appendix 1) offering Pre-Primary, Primary, Secondary and Post-Secondary Catholic educational provision licensed as provided for in the Laws of Malta and recognised as such by the Maltese Episcopal Conference. These are also covered by the agreement on Church Schools between the Republic of Malta and the Holy See signed on the 28th November 1991.

and presented a draft document on the Future of Church Schools. The draft document was discussed again with all stakeholders in January 2025, feedback was gathered, and the present document was prepared. This document, approved by the Maltese Episcopal conference, is to serve as guidelines for practice. The expected spirit, profile, and characteristics are being set for Church Schools to be committed to and experienced by the communities they serve.

This document is to be read as part of an integrated definition of identity for Church Schools in Malta and Gozo, aspiring to guide practice as comprehensively as possible without becoming excessively prescriptive. It is divided into four sections:

1. Aim of Church Schools: constant yet evolving
2. The Mission of Church Schools: Educational, Ecclesial, Evangelical
3. A Context in transformation: Church Schools' contribution in a Catholic reading of Maltese society today
4. Characteristics of Church Schools: non-negotiable principles guiding Catholic Education



Meditation Garden at Dar il-Ħanin Samaritan (2024), Richard England, Santa Venera

1

# Aim of Church Schools:

constant yet evolving

## 1

# Aim of Church Schools: constant yet evolving

**THE CATHOLIC CHURCH** in Malta continually seeks to be prophetic by reading the signs of the times and by responding with wisdom and evangelical fervour. The Maltese Episcopal Conference articulates its vision for witnessing the Gospel and serving Maltese society, among other things, through its ecclesial mission of Catholic education. Through accompanying all individuals in their faith journey, Catholic education is grounded in a vision of life that seeks wholeness, guided by faith that calls us to embrace the fullness of human experience and express it within a community rooted in shared purpose and life. This holistic education, inspired by the presence and message of Jesus Christ, is to be especially offered to students, educators, and parents/legal custodians through the local Catholic schools, better known as Church Schools, whose common Catholic identity is enriched by diverse charisms.

As the Maltese islands are increasingly secular, multicultural, and multireligious, and embedded in a global digital culture, Church Schools have the duty to educate for authentic human and spiritual flourishing by discerning best practices in light of these new local and global cultural and technological challenges and opportunities. The educational experience provided in Church Schools should therefore not be limited to practical concerns but should aspire to a deeper meaning, enlightened by Christ, who not only reveals the truth about God but also the truth about us.



2

# The Mission of Church Schools:

## Educational, Ecclesial, Evangelical

## 2

## The Mission of Church Schools: Educational, Ecclesial, Evangelical

**THE CHURCH'S MANDATE** comes from her divine founder to proclaim the Gospel to the ends of the world (Mt 28: 20). This ecclesial duty of evangelisation is grounded in the firm belief and commitment to human dignity emanating from the fact that human beings are created in the image and likeness of God.<sup>3</sup> The Church must be concerned with the whole of man's life, even the secular part of it, insofar as it has a bearing on his heavenly calling. "The duty and right of educating belongs in a special way to the Church, to which has been divinely entrusted the mission of assisting persons so that they are able to reach the fullness of the Christian life"<sup>4</sup>; therefore, she has a role in the progress and development of education.<sup>5</sup> Thus, educating towards the fullness of human dignity with Church Schools being key pastoral instruments for the Church's mission of evangelisation in culture where every action is animated through a personal relationship with Christ.<sup>6</sup> As Pope Leo XIV states, "education is not an ancillary activity, but forms the very fabric of evangelisation: it is the concrete way in which the Gospel becomes an educational gesture, a relationship, a culture."<sup>7</sup> While all schools promote human excellence in education, "a [Church] School is endowed with a specific identity: that is, 'its reference to a Christian concept of life centred on Jesus Christ'."<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> "For the glory of God is the living man, and the life of man is the vision of God." Saint Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 4, 20, 7: PG 7, 1037.

<sup>4</sup> *Code of Canon Law* (1983), can. 794 §1.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, *The Identity of the Catholic School for a Culture of Dialogue* (25 January 2022), 10.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, 20–21.

<sup>7</sup> Leo XIV, Apostolic Letter *Drawing New Maps of Hope* (27 October 2025), 1.1.

<sup>8</sup> Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, *The Identity of the Catholic School for a Culture of Dialogue* (25 January 2022), 20.



The Christian witness of lay and consecrated educators<sup>9</sup> encourages in the child, adolescent and young adult, a holistic formation in body, mind and spirit by supporting personal wellbeing; by cultivating the need for silence and reflection; by nurturing critical thinking skills; by exemplifying mature moral and spiritual values; by promoting an integral ecological commitment; by fostering a culture of encounter, and by instilling the practice of respectful dialogue, and a consistent preferential option for the poor.<sup>10</sup> Church schools are dedicated to accompanying and educating all individuals, with a special emphasis on supporting the most marginalised. This commitment is evident at the kindergarten, primary, and secondary levels, where the admission process, conducted through a ballot system, allows inclusion for all applicants prior to selection in accordance with published regulations. Hence, Catholic schools foster a culture where the people become the main aim, a community that is “passionate about meeting others, seeking points of contact, building bridges.”<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, 13–14.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, 22.

<sup>11</sup> Francis, Encyclical Letter *Fratelli Tutti* (3 October 2020), 216.

At the post-secondary level, where admission is primarily based on academic performance, Catholic schools continue to strive to address marginalisation through advocacy, social responsibility programs, experiential learning, and principled leadership. These curricular efforts, presented as a holistic programme, aim to equip students with a deeper understanding of humanity and a sense of mission that leads them to become individuals who contribute to the common good as they embark on formal career paths and higher education. Ultimately, Catholic education seeks to transform culture for current and future generations, shaping young adults with a political vision rooted in the common good, guided by the principles of subsidiarity, participation and solidarity emanating from the Gospel and Catholic Social Doctrine. Pope Leo XIV highlights the Church's duty to accompany every person and foster "the growth of freedom, taking on the mission of the Divine Master so that everyone 'may have life, and have it abundantly' (Jn 10:10). The educational styles that have succeeded one another show a vision of man as the image of God, called to truth and goodness, and a multiplicity of methods at the service of this calling."<sup>12</sup>

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12 Leo XIV, Apostolic Letter *Drawing New Maps of Hope* (27 October 2025), 2.1.

3

# A Context in transformation:

Church Schools' contribution in a  
Catholic reading of Maltese society  
today

## 3

## A Context in transformation: Church Schools' contribution in a Catholic reading of Maltese society today

**MALTESE SOCIETY**, like much of Europe, is experiencing increased secularity, migration, and digitalisation. The Church, through Catholic education in its Schools, must engage in dialogue with people of goodwill, seeking to transform Maltese culture from within. Catholic education, therefore, faces the challenge of fostering the peaceful coexistence of diverse cultural expressions.

Despite 96.4% of the population identifying with Roman Catholicism,<sup>13</sup> many live this identity culturally — through feasts, religious symbols in public spaces, and Catholic rites of passage — without necessarily practising their faith.<sup>14</sup> Over the past decades, Sunday Mass attendance has dwindled, with 37% attending in 2017, and the numbers are likely to continue to fall.<sup>15</sup> The Maltese context today presents a complex picture of transition: the island's identity reflects a nation shaped by over 50 years of secularisation and broader currents across Europe.

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<sup>13</sup> Malta National Statistics Office, *Census of population and housing 2021, Final Report*, Malta 2021.

<sup>14</sup> Ara V. Marmara, *L-istat tan-nazzjon: l-istatistka, l-istharrig 2024*, Malta 2024, p. 171–399.

<sup>15</sup> Discern, Institute for Research on Signs of the Times, *Malta Sunday Mass Attendance Census 2017*, Malta 2018.

The widespread promotion of individualism, materialism, and utilitarian reasoning, driven by capitalist and neoliberal dogmas, has led to a globalisation of indifference,<sup>16</sup> an indifference that opened the way to a culture where many seek quick wealth, often at the expense of the environment and social solidarity.<sup>17</sup> Yet poverty remains prevalent in parts of the population.<sup>18</sup> Political activism has waned, with many feeling a loss of agency in the face of growing global crises, including wars and environmental degradation, thus schools should empower the young not to withdraw or be bystanders in life but to immerse themselves in reality and be protagonists of change, fighting for a more just and fraternal society and resisting consumerism and superficial individualism.<sup>19</sup>

***“The culture of comfort, which makes us think only of ourselves, makes us insensitive to the cries of other people, makes us live in soap bubbles which, however lovely, are insubstantial; they offer a fleeting and empty illusion which results in indifference to others; indeed, it even leads to the globalisation of indifference. In this globalised world, we have fallen into globalised indifference. We have become used to the suffering of others: it doesn’t affect me; it doesn’t concern me; it’s none of my business!”<sup>20</sup>***

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<sup>16</sup> Cf. Francis, Encyclical Letter *Fratelli Tutti* (3 October 2020), 209.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, Encyclical Letter *Laudato Si'* (24 May 2015), 158–162.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, Apostolic Exhortation *Christus Vivit* (25 March 2019), 174.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, *Homily at 'Arena' sport camp in Lampedusa* (8 July 2013).

### 3.1 MALTESE SOCIETY IS INCREASINGLY SECULAR

Church Schools carry the profound responsibility of bearing witness to their faith. This witness must be evident, tangible, and intentional, especially in today's context of widespread secularisation, even in nations with deep Catholic roots, as indeed is Malta. Through human and spiritual accompaniment, Church Schools are called to embrace their missionary role by providing an educational experience firmly grounded in the Gospel.<sup>21</sup>

Church Schools play a vital role in preparing individuals to experience and nourish the faith. Through their educational approach, they create an environment that nurtures the desire to seek truth and explore the mystery of one's existence and the world. This journey can lead individuals to the threshold of faith. For those who choose to embrace faith, Church Schools provide the resources and support necessary for a deeper understanding and lived experience of their spiritual journey.<sup>22</sup>



<sup>21</sup> Cf. Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, *Educating to Intercultural Dialogue in Catholic Schools: Living in Harmony for a Civilization of Love* (28 October 2013), 12.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, *The Identity of the Catholic School for a Culture of Dialogue* (25 January 2022), 36.

### 3.2 MALTESE SOCIETY IS INCREASINGLY MULTICULTURAL

Today's societies are characterised by a multicultural and multireligious composition. In this context, "education contains a central challenge for the future: to allow various cultural expressions to co-exist and to promote dialogue so as to foster a peaceful society".<sup>23</sup> The history of different Church Schools in the Maltese Islands is characterised by welcoming persons from various cultural backgrounds and, in many schools, of diverse religious affiliations. "In this context, 'what is required [...] is courageous and innovative fidelity to one's own pedagogical vision', which is expressed in the capacity to bear witness, to know and to dialogue with diversity."<sup>24</sup>



<sup>23</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, *Educating to Intercultural Dialogue in Catholic Schools: Living in Harmony for a Civilization of Love* (28 October 2013), Introduction.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, *The Identity of the Catholic School for a Culture of Dialogue* (25 January 2022), 27.

### 3.3 MALTESE SOCIETY EMBEDDED IN A DIGITAL CULTURE AND ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

In addition to bearing witness, another educational component of school is knowledge in pursuit of truth. School has the critical task of bringing people into contact with a rich cultural and scientific heritage, preparing them for professional life and fostering mutual understanding. Schooling is about relationships and in a digital era, it cannot be reduced to a predictable algorithm.<sup>25</sup> Faced with the continuous technological transformations, the pervasiveness of digital culture and permeating presence of artificial intelligence, professional expertise needs to be equipped with ever newer skills throughout life in order to respond to the needs of the times without, however, “losing the synthesis between faith, culture and life, which is the keystone of the educational mission.”<sup>26</sup>

In our schools, knowledge in pursuit of truth must be supported by means of a solid, permanent formation that enables educators and school leaders to be characterised by a marked ability to create, invent and manage learning environments that provide plentiful opportunities, as well as “to respect students’ different intelligences and guide them towards significant and profound learning”.<sup>27</sup> Accompanying pupils in getting to know themselves, their aptitudes and inner resources so that they can make conscious life choices is of primary importance in our schools.

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<sup>25</sup> Cf. Leo XIV, Apostolic Letter *Drawing New Maps of Hope* (27 October 2025), 4.1.

<sup>26</sup> Congregation for Catholic Education, *Circular Letter to Schools, Universities and Educational Institutions* (10 September 2020), p. 2.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, *Instrumentum Laboris, Educating Today and Tomorrow: A Renewing Passion* (7 April 2014), 7.

### 3.4 PRESERVING CATHOLIC IDENTITY IN A SPIRIT OF DIALOGUE AND OPENNESS TOWARDS OTHERS

Openness and inclusivity should characterise Church Schools. This inclusivity is fundamental to their identity and mission.<sup>28</sup> While embracing diversity, Church Schools strive to uphold their unique Catholic identity, which is paramount in fostering a culture of dialogue.<sup>29</sup> A Church School unambiguously Catholic is inclusive of people of other faiths, while being explicit about its own faith tradition. The Catholic Church is inherently a Church of dialogue. Church schools, while embracing this spirit, are entrusted with the responsibility of upholding and preserving their core beliefs, principles, and values.<sup>30</sup> We inhabit a world characterised by constant change and fluidity, where the only constant remains the Gospel.

Church Schools participate in the Church's ecclesial mission; they should foster a Catholic ethos that promotes a synodal approach, in which the voices of everyone who is inherent in dignity are heard. A top-down approach is not aligned with the Gospel language and methodology Jesus used when accompanying his followers. Schools should strive to align with the Gospel values and nurture grassroots engagement by respectfully engaging with the cultural, religious, and social backgrounds of both educators and learners.



<sup>28</sup> Cf. Leo XIV, Apostolic Letter *Drawing New Maps of Hope* (27 October 2025), 8.1, 8.3.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, 3.1, 8.3.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. Francis, XVI Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, *For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation, Mission, Final Document* (26 October 2024), 146.

# 4

## **Characteristics of Church Schools:**

**non-negotiable principles guiding  
Catholic Education**

## 4

## Characteristics of Church Schools: non-negotiable principles guiding Catholic Education

**THE FOLLOWING** non-negotiable characteristics should define the identity of Church Schools in Malta and Gozo, serving as guiding principles to ensure that each Church School maintains a transparent and authentic Catholic ethos:

- 4.1 Committed to a Christ-centred perspective.
- 4.2 Committed to a learning process imbued with a Catholic ethos.
- 4.3 Committed to a consistent ethic of life and care of all creation.
- 4.4 Committed to advancing education for peace.
- 4.5 Committed to being synodal schools.
- 4.6 Committed to the school's distinct heritage, identity and charism.
- 4.7 Committed to a safeguarding culture and practice.

These characteristics, each expanded further in this section, are foundational elements that every Church School is called to embody. While these principles demand faithfulness to Catholic identity, they simultaneously celebrate the diversity of approaches within the Catholic tradition.





A detail from the Monument to Christ the King (1917), Antonio Sciortino, Floriana

## 4.1 COMMITTED TO A CHRIST-CENTRED PERSPECTIVE

Catholic schools centre on Christ Jesus, the Truth, and the ultimate model of human virtues.<sup>31</sup> He inspires every dimension of the school, including its philosophy, broader curriculum, community life, and physical and digital environments. The purpose of Catholic education is the integral formation of the human person, preparing them for life through ethical and social awareness, through an understanding of the transcendental,<sup>32</sup> as well as inviting them into or deepening an existing relationship with Christ Jesus.

### FOUNDED ON CHRISTIAN ANTHROPOLOGY

Church schools synthesise culture and faith, and faith and life, integrating all aspects of knowledge in light of the Gospel, and fostering Christian values. Human knowledge is understood as a truth to be uncovered, ultimately guiding individuals toward the discovery of ultimate Truth itself.<sup>33</sup> In the words of Pope Leo XIV, “The foundation remains the same: the person, image of God (Gen 1:26), capable of truth and relationship. Therefore, the question of the relationship between faith and reason is not an optional chapter: ‘Religious Truth is not only a portion, but a condition of general knowledge!’”<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, Apostolic Exhortation *Christus Vivit* (25 March 2019), 222.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. Leo XIV, Apostolic Letter *Drawing New Maps of Hope* (27 October 2025), 4.2.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, 3.1.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. *ibid.*

## ANIMATED BY COMMUNION AND COMMUNITY IN SYNERGY WITH FAMILY

Church Schools characteristically foster a strong sense of community — deeply relational and spiritual — rooted in the nature of God, humanity, and shared purpose. The divine image is reflected in every person and is most profoundly revealed in the communion of individuals, mirroring the unity among them.<sup>35</sup>

The Catholic identity of a school is witnessed by its community, which includes all school staff, irrespective of their faith tradition or cultural background. Together, they shape a Christian environment through their goodwill and commitment to dialogue — informed by reason, good sense, and moderation — and to solidarity, informed by courage and justice.

Moreover, central to a Church School's mission is the preferential option for the poor, which requires a deep understanding of the challenges faced by those in the existential peripheries of our society.<sup>36</sup> Hence, Catholic education emphasises values that shape human attitudes, a conscientious sense of responsibility, truth-seeking combined with openness to critical thinking, and solidarity with all individuals.<sup>37</sup> By fostering justice and inspiring students and their families to become positive agents of change, Catholic education offered in Church Schools seeks to form individuals who can meaningfully contribute to a more equitable world.<sup>38</sup> By striving to prioritise quality education for the disadvantaged and marginalised, Catholic Schools live out Christ's call to care for the marginalised. When the school community serves as a living example of compassion, justice, humility and service, it ensures a lasting impact on society and contributes to the stewardship of creation.

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<sup>35</sup> Cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, n. 1702.

Educators are to embrace the mission and vision of the Church School, guiding the social development of the young entrusted to their care, encouraging meaningful connections within the school community and beyond. Both lay and religiously consecrated educators collaborate and contribute to the common educational endeavour, in synergy with the family, thereby supporting parents as prime, lifelong, and life-wide educators.



<sup>36</sup> Cf. Leo XIV, Apostolic Exhortation *Dilexi Te* (4 October 2025), 16; Leo XIV, Apostolic Letter *Drawing New Maps of Hope* (27 October 2025), 2.3.

<sup>37</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, Apostolic Letter *Drawing New Maps of Hope* (27 October 2025), 6.1-7.3.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, 4.2

## SUSTAINED BY GOSPEL WITNESS

A clear understanding of Catholic education's unique mission is especially essential for all school staff, as their personal witness profoundly influences students, often more powerfully than instruction alone. Faith development through education relies heavily on educators who live out and convey the Christian message. Pope Saint Paul VI highlighted that people today are more receptive to witnesses than to mere teachers<sup>39</sup>, underscoring the importance of educators embodying Gospel values both in and out of the classroom. This witness shapes the school's ethos, enhances the curriculum, and strengthens its role in the Church's mission of evangelisation and education.

This requires a thoughtful approach, recognising that not all educators may personally adhere to the Catholic faith. Nonetheless, all Church School employees ought to respect the apostolic nature of Church Schools. The key lies in maintaining an open, non-judgmental attitude while respecting Church doctrine and upholding an exemplary life free from discrimination. This requires recognising and understanding the new margins of society and the systems that create them, while working tirelessly for fairness and equality as a challenge to the *status quo*.

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<sup>39</sup> Cf. Saint Paul VI, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (8 December 1975), 41.

The role of educators in Church Schools is more than a profession — it is a sacred vocation rooted in Christian beliefs.<sup>40</sup> Educators are called to view their work as an integral part of their faith journey, one that transcends academic instruction, embodying a personal mission within the Church to nurture both students' knowledge and spiritual growth. The Gospel spirit needs to permeate every aspect of the educational climate, with Mary, the Mother of God, providing a guiding presence, which continues to foster the community aspect of the school.

**In essence, Catholic education becomes a way to serve God and others, aligning professional responsibilities with a higher spiritual purpose.**

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<sup>40</sup> Cf. Leo XIV, Apostolic Letter *Drawing New Maps of Hope* (27 October 2025), 31.

## 4.2 COMMITTED TO A LEARNING PROCESS IMBUED WITH A CATHOLIC ETHOS

Catholic education integrates learning with formation, even as it differentiates between them. The search for truth in teaching leads to the discovery of Truth itself and shapes the students' intellectual, moral and spiritual development. "Schools are places where questions are not silenced, and doubt is not banished, but accompanied. The heart, there, dialogue[s] with the heart, and the method is that of listening that recognises the other as an asset, not a threat."<sup>41</sup>

Catholic education offers students the space and guides them to discern the strong connection between academic knowledge, reason, and faith. Pope Francis clearly advocated an education that engages the mind, heart, and hands, aligning thinking with feelings and actions, thereby encouraging students to feel deeply about what they believe and do, and to act in harmony with their thoughts and emotions.<sup>42</sup> This ties into a pedagogy that educates for the transformation of teams into communities, and of consumers into human beings in search of meaning.

Teaching across the various subject areas, underpinned by Catholic Social teaching, invites students to reflect on their agency in promoting justice, peace, and solidarity. Schools must balance human experience and understanding, ensuring pupils grasp the meaning behind their knowledge. Such educational experiences lead to a deep understanding of integral ecology – that all that happens in our world is deeply connected across different facets and that, through education, hope for a better tomorrow is possible through the agency of everyone.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, 3.1.

<sup>42</sup> Cf. Francis, *Greetings of His Holiness Pope Francis to the Managers and Students of the 'Ambrosoli' Institute in Codogno (Lodi)* (22 May 2021).

<sup>43</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, Encyclical Letter *Laudato Si'* (24 May 2015), 209–215.



### 4.3 COMMITTED TO A CONSISTENT LIFE ETHIC AND CARE OF ALL CREATION

Catholic schools are to promote a consistent life ethic and care of all creation which are rooted in biblical teachings and exemplified by Jesus' compassionate ministry. This challenges individuals to recognise the sacred value of life across multiple domains — from opposing abortion and nuclear war to addressing racism, poverty, capital punishment, and environmental destruction.<sup>44</sup> It calls for a holistic perspective that transcends political divisions, urging people to be pro-life in all aspects from beginning to end: supporting the unborn, the marginalised, and the dying alike.

This ethical approach also promotes a renewed lifestyle that prioritises 'being' over 'having' and persons over things, inviting people to move from indifference to genuine concern for others, ultimately challenging the prevailing culture of death and fostering a more compassionate, inclusive society. As Pope Leo XIV affirms, "Christian education resembles a choreography... To form the 'whole' person means avoiding compartmentalisation. When it is true, faith is not an added 'subject,' but a breath that oxygenates every other subject. Thus, Catholic education becomes leaven in the human community: it generates reciprocity, overcomes reductionism, and opens up to social responsibility."<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Cf. Leo XIV, Apostolic Exhortation *Dilexi Te* (4 October 2025), 72, 92–98.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, Apostolic Letter *Drawing New Maps of Hope* (27 October 2025), 6.2.



Church schools are also called to be stewards of creation through environmental education and action as informed by Pope Francis's 2015 encyclical letter, *Laudato Si'*; his subsequent 2023 apostolic exhortation on climate crisis, *Laudate Deum*, and the new formulary for the Mass for Care of Creation published in 2025.<sup>46</sup> This demands that Church schools are to prepare students and families to feel responsible for all creation and to understand critical environmental issues like global warming through scientifically rigorous curricula. Examples of how this can be implemented in practice are: integrating ecological ethics across subjects, fostering global partnerships, and engaging in community service that addresses pollution and habitat loss. The goal is to respond to the Church's call for profound interior conversion, recognising our common origin and shared future, while developing new attitudes that ensure sustainable development and a quality life for all humanity.

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid., *Decree of the Dicastery for Legislative Texts on the Formulary and Biblical Readings for the Mass for the Care of Creation* (3 July 2025).

## 4.4 COMMITTED TO ADVANCING EDUCATION FOR PEACE

In a world increasingly marked by division, conflict, and social unrest, educating students for peace is more vital than ever. Peace, in the words of Pope Leo XIV, “is not the absence of conflict: it is the gentle strength that rejects violence. An education in ‘unarmed and disarming’ peace teaches us to set down the weapons of the aggressive word and the judgmental look, in order to learn the language of mercy and reconciled justice.”<sup>47</sup> Catholic schools should therefore embrace a comprehensive approach to peace education, firmly grounded in Catholic social teaching rooted in the teachings of Christ. Peace values should be integrated across all aspects of school life.

Through their curriculum students learn about conflict resolution, respect for human dignity, and the importance of serving others, fostering intergenerational dialogue, promoting human dignity, and nurturing students as artisans of peace. This educational framework should include values-based learning materials that support self-worth, understanding of others, and constructive conflict resolution. Peace education calls for the formation of empathy, a commitment to justice, and an openness to reconciliation, guiding students to practise kindness, respect diversity, and actively seek harmony in their daily lives. By equipping students with conflict resolution skills, critical thinking, and a deep respect for human dignity, education empowers them to challenge injustice, bridge divisions, and grow into compassionate leaders who contribute to a more peaceful and understanding world.

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid., Apostolic Letter *Drawing New Maps of Hope* (27 October 2025), 7.3.

Schools should create safe spaces for dialogue, mediation, and healing, while explicitly fostering humility and communication skills as essential tools for peacebuilding, and promoting values such as love, forgiveness, and social justice. By nurturing an environment of understanding and inclusivity, Catholic schools help form a generation committed to building a more just and harmonious world, shaping the students into compassionate, just, and responsible individuals.



By drawing on the religious teachings on mercy and reconciliation, Catholic schools can move towards restorative justice practices rather than purely punitive approaches. Peace education fosters a culture of dialogue, empathy, and nonviolence, equipping students to become peacemakers within their communities and beyond. Engaging in shared education initiatives with schools from other sectors can deepen understanding and respect for diverse cultures, reinforcing a holistic vision of peace education.

This holistic approach to peace education will equip students with the knowledge, skills, and values necessary to contribute to a more just and harmonious world, embodying the Catholic vision of human dignity and the common good.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, Apostolic Exhortation *Dilexi Te* (4 October 2025), 97.

## 4.5 COMMITTED TO BEING SYNODAL SCHOOLS

Catholic schools align with Pope Leo's vision of a Church that journeys together, where authority is exercised as service rather than power, and where discernment emerges from the sense of faith (*sensus fidei*) present in the entire People of God.<sup>49</sup> As truly synodal entities, Church schools embrace collective discernment through meaningful dialogue between all stakeholders. This involves creating formal structures for students, educators, parents, religious leaders, and lay people to participate in decision-making processes. Beyond mere consultation, synodality requires deep spiritual listening to the Holy Spirit's guidance and to each community member's lived experience.<sup>50</sup>

Church Schools should foster spiritual conversations, particularly among leadership teams, and collaborative leadership models, as well as opportunities for shared prayer and reflection. Key elements include respecting the complementary vocations of religious, diocesan, and lay staff, ensuring subsidiarity in school governance, and developing feedback mechanisms that reach across the entire school community.

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid., *Homily at mass on the Jubilee of the Synodal Teams and Participatory Bodies* (26 October 2025).

<sup>50</sup> Cf. Francis, XVI Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, *For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation, Mission, Final Document* (26 October 2024), 43.

#### 4.6 COMMITMENT TO THE SCHOOL'S DISTINCT HERITAGE, IDENTITY, AND CHARISM

The diversity of charisms across the Church Schools in Malta and Gozo reflects God's love for the Church and society, forming a rich and vibrant witness to the Gospel and the Mystery of Christ. A charism is an inner sense of a Gospel call — a gift inspired by the Holy Spirit that renews the Church's mission. Charisms shape and add meaning to a school's ethos, social fabric, and identity. They provide a distinctive lens through which the Gospel animates the school community, preparing young people for a life of service in a changing world. Schools that live their charism impart a distinctive lens, providing a particular methodology for living the Gospel values.

Church schools founded by Dioceses, Institutes of Consecrated Life and Public Associations of the Faithful, live out a particular identity and mission in accordance with their characteristic spirit and founding intentions. Thus, schools should provide opportunities for their charism to be lived and exercised in daily school life, enhancing and deepening the relationship with the person of Christ.





Christ the Redeemer Hill, Marsalforn

## 4.7 COMMITTED TO A SAFEGUARDING CULTURE AND PRACTICE

Catholic schools acknowledge with the Catholic Church the profound impact of abuse on victims and their families. They must establish and uphold a zero-tolerance environment completely free from abuse — whether sexual, physical, psychological, or emotional.<sup>51</sup> All Church Schools are committed to upholding this culture, and determine comprehensive safeguarding measures, including:

1. Clear ethical conduct guidelines for the whole community.
2. Regular training programmes to promote respectful relationships and recognise inappropriate behaviour.
3. Robust policies, under the direction of the Safeguarding Commissions, that ensure swift action against any abuse allegations.

These measures are essential to protect students and staff and sustain trust in our educational institutions.

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<sup>51</sup> Cf. Maltese Episcopal Conference and Conference of Major Religious Superiors, *Safeguarding Policy adopted by the Church in Malta and Gozo*, Malta 2024.

# Conclusion

This document provides valuable theological and philosophical insights into the nature and mission of Catholic schools in Malta and Gozo and determines the essential and non-negotiable principles guiding these schools. It aims at establishing a foundation for ongoing formation of all educators, primarily to school leaders. This document empowers Church schools to assist the local Church in fulfilling its prophetic mission as it faces rapid cultural shifts, especially the challenges of secularism, digitalisation, and multiculturalism.

Through their educational excellence, rooted in evangelical mission, and evolving charisms, Church schools are called to foster a culture of encounter and dialogue, promote an integral human and ecological conversion, and nurture a transformative response to the needs of Maltese society.



# Appendiċi

## *Appendix*

## Appendiċi 1 / Appendix 1

# Lista ta' Skejjet tal-Knisja f'Malta u Għawdex

## List of Church Schools in Malta and Gozo

### KINDERGARTEN (MALTA)

- St Albert the Great College, Fgura
- St Aloysius College, Ғal Balzan
- St Angela, Ғal Lija
- St Angela, Msida
- St Angela, Rabat, Malta
- St Angela, Ғaḡ-Ḷabar
- St Dorothy's, Tas-Sliema
- St Dorothy's, Ғaḡ-Ḷebbuḡ
- St Francis, Birkirkara
- St Francis, San Ġwann
- St Francis, Santa Luċija
- St Joan Antide, Gudja
- St Joseph, Blata l-Bajda
- St Joseph, Paola
- St Joseph, Tas-Sliema
- St Monica, Gżira
- St Monica, Mosta
- Theresa Nuzzo School, Ғamrun

### KINDERGARTEN (GOZO)

- Bishop's Conservatory, Rabat, Gozo
- Laura Vicuna School, Rabat, Gozo
- St Francis, Rabat, Gozo
- St Theresa, Ta' Kerċem

### PRIMARY SCHOOLS (MALTA)

- Archbishop's Seminary, Rabat, Malta
- De La Salle College, Vittoriosa
- Our Lady Immaculate, Ғamrun
- Sacred Heart College, St Julian's
- St Albert the Great College, Valletta
- St Aloysius College, Ғal Balzan
- St Augustine College, Marsa
- St Benilds, Tas-Sliema
- St Dorothy's, Tas-Sliema
- St Dorothy's, Ғaḡ-Ḷebbuḡ
- St Francis, Birkirkara
- St Francis, Cospicua
- St Francis, Msida
- St Joan Antide, Gudja
- St Joseph, Blata l-Bajda
- St Joseph, Paola
- St Joseph, Tas-Sliema
- St Monica, Birkirkara
- St Monica, Gżira
- St Monica, Mosta
- St Paul's Missionary College, Rabat, Malta
- Stella Maris College, Gżira
- Theresa Nuzzo School, Marsa

**PRIMARY SCHOOLS (GOZO)**

- Bishop's Conservatory, Rabat, Gozo
  - Laura Vicuna, Għasri
  - St Francis, Rabat, Gozo
  - St Theresa, Ta' Kerċem
- 

**SECONDARY SCHOOLS (MALTA)**

- Archbishop's Seminary, Rabat, Malta
  - De La Salle College, Vittoriosa
  - Immaculate Conception, Ғal Tarxien
  - Our Lady Immaculate, Ғamrun
  - Sacred Heart College, St Julian's
  - Saint Elias College, Santa Venera
  - Savio College, Ғad-Dingli
  - St Albert the Great College, Valletta
  - St Aloysius College, Birkirkara
  - St Augustine College, Tal-Pietà
  - St Dorothy's, Ғaḡ-Żebbuġ
  - St Francis, Tas-Sliema
  - St Joseph, Blata l-Bajda
  - St Joseph, Paola
  - St Joseph, Tas-Sliema
  - St Michael School, Santa Venera
  - St Monica, Birkirkara
  - St Monica, Gżira
  - St Paul's Missionary College, Rabat, Malta
  - Stella Maris College, Gżira
- 

**SECONDARY SCHOOLS (GOZO)**

- Bishop's Conservatory, Rabat, Gozo
  - Sacred Heart Seminary, Rabat, Gozo
- 

**POST-SECONDARY SCHOOLS (MALTA)**

- De La Salle College, Vittoriosa
- St Aloysius College, Birkirkara

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**SECRETARIAT FOR  
CATHOLIC EDUCATION**

**Telephone:**

SfCE: +356 2203 9300

Admissions: +356 2203 9360

---

**Email:**

[info@csm.edu.mt](mailto:info@csm.edu.mt)

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**Address:**

36, Segretarjat għall-Edukazzjoni Kattolika  
Triq Idmejda, Ħal Balzan BZN1520

[csm.edu.mt](http://csm.edu.mt)