

Mediating school ethos
in the
multi-denominational setting of
Community and Comprehensive
Schools

Michael Drumm

13 May 2010

Community School Deed of Trust

“The school to be established with the object of providing a comprehensive system of post-primary education open to all the children of the community, combining instruction in academic and practical subjects and ongoing education for persons living at or near aforesaid and generally for the purpose of contributing towards the spiritual, moral, mental and physical well-being and development of the said community” (*Deed of Trust* art. 4)

Different types of schools

- Denominational schools
- Non-denominational schools
- Inter-denominational schools
- Multi-denominational schools

Multi-denominational means...

- All are welcome
- Must provide for all, including religious education
- “The religious worship attended by any pupil at the school and the religious instruction given to any pupil shall be in accordance with the rites, practice and teaching of the religious denomination to which the pupil belongs”
{Second schedule 11 (ii)}

Multi-denominational does not mean....

- Anything and everything
- Religion is irrelevant
- All religions are the same
- We can reduce religious beliefs to the lowest common denominator between them
- We just need to give information on all religions

Multi-denominational at its best would mean....

- Acknowledging prejudice
- Cherishing difference
- Respecting the integrity and irreducibility of each religious faith
- Nourishing the religious identity of students
- Fostering encounter with the faith of the ‘other’
- Accepting failures
- Healing memories
- Creating the future

The multi-denominational characteristic spirit of each school

- “The Trustees of any particular Community School must agree the characteristic spirit of the school. In so agreeing, Trustees need to take cognisance of the school’s inherited tradition and values and the founding intention of the school.” (ACCS, *Guidelines on the Role of Trustees*, p.10)
- A responsibility for trustees
- More than a mission statement
- Board of management, principal, staff must respect and promote this characteristic spirit
- What if trustees cannot agree?
- Particular responsibilities of religious trustees