
New Zealand Catholic Bishops Conference

MEMORANDUM

To: Proprietors of NZ Catholic Schools and Bishop's agents

Re: Update for Preference of Enrolment, Criterion 5.4

From: New Zealand Catholic Bishops Conference

Date: November 2016

Overview

The New Zealand Catholic Bishops Conference recently agreed to amend the wording of preference criterion 5.4. This memorandum is aimed at providing advice on its interpretation and application for all those involved in enrolment processes in NZ Catholic Schools.

Existing 5.4 preference criterion

*With the agreement of the child's parent/guardian, a grandparent or other **significant adult** in the child's life, such as an aunt, uncle or godparent, undertakes to support the child's formation in the faith and practices of the Catholic Church.*

New 5.4 preference criterion

*With the agreement of the child's parent/guardian, a significant **familial adult** such as a grandparent, aunt or uncle who is actively involved in the child's upbringing undertakes to support the child's formation in the faith and practices of the Catholic Church.*

Reasons for this change

The preference criteria for enrolment in Catholic schools is reviewed from time to time to ensure it is consistent and fair and to respond to feedback from those involved in the enrolment process.

The original intent of 5.4 criterion, was to allow for true "significant others" to seek a Catholic education for the child(ren) in their care and who were committed to actively and authentically supporting the child(ren) in the formation of their faith and the practices of the Catholic Church (stipulated in the Preference Certificate). Such significant others envisaged were:

- Foster parents, guardians.
- Extended whanau members committed to the upbringing of the child (grandparents, aunts and uncles).
- Another significant other could be someone such as a member of a religious order or similarly committed person who undertakes to holistically support for pastoral and compassionate reasons a student with special circumstances.

However, the existing wording of Criterion 5.4 on the Preference Certificate suggests a less significant relationship is acceptable especially with the inclusion of a godparent. This can create an expectation that it can be a sponsor relationship which may or may not be truly significant and has also led to consistent issues with pressure being placed on people granting preference of enrolment to sign a preference card using 5.4, even where the relationship of the significant other is tenuous e.g. my aunt who lives overseas or even the grandfather of my child who lives in another distant city/town in New Zealand or the principal of a school or the person responsible for boarding of the boarding school that my child will attend are-Catholic are often used.

Application of the newly updated 5.4 preference criterion

Extract from revised 2016 Guidelines are included here to provide a context and foundation for the purpose of this memorandum

4.8 The interpretation for granting preference under criterion 5.4 needs clarification. The following requirements are essential when people are seeking preference of enrolment under criteria 5.4:

- The significant familial adult in the child's life, who is undertaking to support the child's formation in the faith and practices of the Catholic Church, would need to accompany the parents/caregivers when they are seeking preference of enrolment.
- If the significant familial adult is not personally known to the person granting preference of enrolment, they need to have some evidence to show they are an active member of the Catholic Church.
- The significant familial adult must live in a physical position that enables sufficient contact and influence to be able to actively support the child's formation in the faith and practices of the Catholic Church.
- The parents/caregivers should give written agreement that they will support the child's formation in the faith and practices of the Catholic Church. This is included in the attached revised version of the Preference Card.
- The significant familial adult gives permission and commits to being included in the school/college's faith events and Religious Education programme, e.g. school masses, liturgies on the Religious Education programme, social justice and service initiatives as all parents are expected to. This is included in the attached revised version of the Preference Certificate.

4.9 The “significant familial adult” must:

- Have a familial and spiritual/pastoral connection with the child.
- Be authentic and honour the integrity of the NZCBC’s intent of the 5.4 criterion.
- Be in a genuine, meaningful relationship with the child.
- Be an active faith member of a Catholic Eucharistic community.
- Live geographically close enough to support the child(ren) in liturgical and Eucharistic celebrations at both the school and church levels.
- Committed to assisting the parent(s) in their support of their child(ren) in the formation of their faith and the practices of the Catholic school which includes attendance at Sunday masses.
- Be in attendance when the child(ren) is seeking a preference certificate from the Bishop’s agent and is also being enrolled at the school/college.
- Give permission and commit to being included in the school/college’s faith events and Religious Education programme, e.g. school masses, liturgies on the Religious Education programme, social justice and service initiatives as all parents are expected to.

4.10 What does **NOT** constitute an authentic “significant familial adult”?:

- o The neighbour or family friend is a Catholic.
- o A Catholic godparent of a child who has already been baptised in another faith tradition

4.11 Some examples of a significant familial relationship could include:

- o A legal guardian who has responsibility for the child after the parents death knowing the parents would have wanted a Catholic education for their child even if they had not baptised their child.
- o An involved Catholic grandparent who had lapsed in practice of the faith and not baptised their children. Subsequent to the children becoming adults the grandparent has re- activated their faith and become involved in the Church and hopes for baptism of their grandchild and maybe their children.

Two amendments to the Preference Certificate

- 1) The Preference Certificate has been amended to reflect the rewording of Criterion.
- 2) For the purposes of evangelisation and the explicit permission by the Parents(s)/Caregiver(s) for the sharing of contact details and information, we have also added the following sentence be added to the Preference Certificate:

“I/we further agree that my/our contact details will be shared with the school and parish for the purpose of faith formation”.

Implementation of new preference criterion

1. The new amended criterion 5.4 becomes effective for all new applications for enrolment from January 2017.
2. The bishops are mindful of the need for ongoing education and support for Bishop's agents around the Preference Certificate criteria, especially criterion 5.4 and this will be provided at a diocesan level.
3. We ask Boards and Principals to actively create evangelisation opportunities for all children and parents/caregivers and develop sacramental pathways in mutual partnership with the parish-faith community, including the significant familial adult in the child(rens) school life.
4. The relevant diocesan Education Office will monitor criterion 5.4 percentages in each school and moderate authentic application of the 5.4 criterion by the mandated Bishop's agents.
6. It may be decided by a Bishop that all applications for a Preference Certificate using the 5.4 Criterion be referred to one person mandated by the Bishop. Please seek advice from your own diocesan education office for the application of this policy.

Enclosures

Appendix 1: 2016 *"Guidelines for the Granting of Preference of Enrolment in New Zealand Catholic Schools"*

Appendix 2: Amended Preference Certificate dated October 2016

✠ Patrick Dunn
Bishop of Auckland
President, NZCBC

✠ John Dew
Archbishop of Wellington
Vice-President, NZCBC

✠ Charles Drennan
Bishop of Palmerston North
Secretary, NZCBC

✠ Colin Campbell
Bishop of Dunedin

✠ Stephen Lowe
Bishop of Hamilton

Fr Richard Loughnan
Administrator
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