



TAGGED (S65) POSITIONS – CLARIFICATIONS FOR CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. Vicars of Education, diocesan education office leaders and representatives of Catholic principals met in 30 September 2004 to consider tagged positions. This paper is presented as a result of discussions at that meeting, and provides clarification on current issues to do with tagged positions.

2. THE CURRENT SITUATION

- 2.1. There is currently a shortage of applicants for tagged (S65) positions, and this is particularly apparent in North Island dioceses and at secondary school level. Moreover, the purpose of tagged positions is not always clearly understood by school staff and Boards of Trustees.
- 2.2. Tagged (S65) positions are often held by very long-serving staff members. This means that over the next few years it will be crucial to ensure that younger staff and teachers in training appreciate the nature and purpose of tagged positions and the meaning of the phrase Religious Instruction, so that they are willing and competent to apply for such positions. This is necessary to preserve the Special Character of the school and also to fulfil the law, as expressed in the PSCI Act and in each school's individual Integration Agreement.

3. THE PURPOSE OF TAGGED (S65) POSITIONS

- 3.1. Tagged (S65) positions carry a special responsibility for Religious Instruction. The legal definition is analysed in Section 5 below.
- 3.2. Every teacher in a Catholic school has an obligation to support the Special Character of the school. All teachers need to have spelled out to them both in the job application pack and at the interview what this means, and they need to agree to do this. At the same time, tagged positions provide the legal safeguard, ensuring that the school can employ a sufficient number of Catholic teachers who understand and live by the Special Character, so that the school is truly a Catholic community. Teachers create this community by everything they say and do, and the Principal and Director of Religious Studies need the support of a sufficient number of other Catholic teachers to sustain the Catholic community of the school.

3.3. Therefore teachers in tagged positions are not appointed simply to teach Religious Education, although this is the specialist task of some teachers with tagged positions. They are appointed to contribute to the Religious Instruction of the school. This phrase was chosen with care at the time of the PSCI Act, and it continues to be useful because it implies far more than Religious Education – it includes the whole Catholic Special Character of the school, all of which is designed to contribute to the Religious Instruction of the students.

4. DETERMINING ACCEPTABILITY FOR A S65 (TAGGED) POSITION

4.1. A S65 position is one in which the person is representing the Catholic community in a ministry role. It is the policy of the New Zealand Catholic Bishops, therefore, that the person appointed must be a Catholic who is baptised, active and in full communion with the faith community. This should be endorsed by the applicant's parish priest, ethnic chaplain or lay pastoral co-ordinator. Note that a catechumen who has reached committal stage may also be considered.

5. A BRIEF EXPLANATION OF THE S65 REQUIREMENT IN THE PSCI ACT

5.1. The requirement is as follows: "Willingness and ability to take part in religious instruction appropriate to that school shall be a condition of appointment." (*PSCI Act S65*)

5.2. **Willingness:** Free offer and acceptance of involvement. Not coerced.

5.3. **Ability:** Possessing acceptable experience, qualifications and qualities, and providing evidence of these to the satisfaction of the Proprietor and the employer. (See further comments in Section 6)

5.4. **Take part in:** Participate in a way or ways appropriate to the position held.

5.5. RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION: **THROUGH WORD OR ACTION, TEACHING, EXPLAINING OR MODELLING THE DOCTRINES, VALUES AND PRACTICES OF THE CATHOLIC FAITH. (SEE FURTHER COMMENTS IN SECTION 7)**

5.6. **Appropriate to that School:** "The school is a Roman Catholic School in which the whole School community through the general School programme and in its religious instruction and observances, exercises the right to live and teach the values of Jesus Christ. These values are as expressed in the Scriptures and in the practices, worship and doctrine of the Roman Catholic

Church, as determined from time to time by the Roman Catholic Bishop of the Diocese of” (*Integration Agreement*)

- 5.7. **Shall be a condition of appointment:** Mandatory requirement; no exception; an integral part of the job.
- 5.8. Schools’ Integration Agreements state that, as well as the S65 tags for the Principal and the Director of Religious Studies, the school is required to have a proportion of other teaching positions that are tagged (40% for secondary schools and 60% for primary schools). The formula that determines the actual number is in the Board of Trustees Handbook.

6. GENERAL COMMENTS ON ACCEPTABILITY

- 6.1. The applicant must be judged “acceptable” for the level of responsibility inherent in the position. There is a consensus among those delegated by New Zealand’s Bishops to determine who is acceptable or not, that a broad spectrum of acceptability is appropriate, depending on specific cases. The applicant’s likely development in religious understanding and commitment is also to be taken into account. This may be particularly relevant in the case of a young teacher, or in the case of an applicant moving into the Catholic school system. Different levels of ability to “take part in Religious Instruction” are to be expected from teachers and those in positions of leadership, in particular Directors of Religious Studies and Principals. Diocesan offices are able to give guidance on this.
- 6.2. It is possible to deem an applicant acceptable subject to certain conditions (which are then to be included in the person’s job description and performance appraisal). Such a condition is normally a contractual requirement to meet the appropriate Accreditation Level for the position. In such a case the Board of Trustees would endeavour to ensure it is possible for the applicant to achieve the qualification, and may agree to provide assistance with the costs of the course.

7. FURTHER COMMENTS ON THE DEFINITION OF RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION AND TAGGED POSITIONS

- 7.1. **Religious Instruction** is evangelisation - it is the passing on of faith, through the ongoing establishment and support of a Christian community which lives out its faith, witnessing to the Gospel in daily action and attitudes. It includes teaching or explaining the doctrines and practices of the faith, not only through Religious Education classes but also through the indirect teaching which occurs through role modelling and witness to Catholic values, behaviour, and general Catholic life. All teachers in tagged positions carry out Religious Instruction outside the Religious Education

curriculum, and are effective in so far as they contribute to the whole evangelising function of the school, assisting in promoting the faith education of those in the school community. They teach “what it means to be human. ... A teacher who has a clear vision of the Christian milieu and lives in accord with it will be able to help young people develop a similar vision, and will give them the inspiration they need to put it into practice.” (*The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School*, pp 76-77). Teachers in tagged positions respond to a call: to witness to the Gospel, to continue and deepen their commitment to the Church, to foster Christian community, to seek out ways to serve the Christian community and to continue acquiring the knowledge, skills and abilities needed to communicate the Gospel message effectively.

- 7.2. Boards of Trustees and Principals need to develop and provide teachers with a detailed statement of the actions and behaviours expected of those holding tagged positions. These might include:
- membership of the Catholic Character committee
 - specific roles in the preparation of school liturgies and assemblies
 - assistance with the arrangement of prayer resources for classrooms and the staffroom
 - interaction with the local parish(es) on behalf of the school
 - promotion of opportunities for staff professional development in Special Character
 - responsibility for aspects of the induction of new staff into the Special Character of the school
 - continuing support of one or more non-Catholic teachers (to assist them to understand particular Catholic practices within the school)
 - responsibilities in the development of values and virtues programmes
 - a wide range of other tasks.

The principal could ensure that teachers in tagged positions receive regular professional development time on their role, including discussion of how this role can be carried out or deepened within the school. They could also ensure that their fulfilment of this role is appraised and recorded. The *Accreditation Handbook* provides some useful suggestions which could be adapted for use with teachers holding tagged positions. (See pp14-15, Appraisal, and the Note on p19.)

- 7.3. However, it is crucial that the development of a deeper understanding of the role of teachers with tagged positions does not undermine the responsibility of all teachers to contribute to the Special Character of the school, especially if there are other Catholics on the staff who do not hold tagged positions. Strengthening the understanding of the work of those in tagged positions should strengthen the work of all.

8. FILLING TAGGED POSITIONS

- 8.1. Tagged positions may be filled internally, provided that the availability of the tag is advertised to the whole staff, so that anyone qualified may apply to take it up. Applicants fill out a S65 form. The diocesan office (or the Appointments Committee, in the case of a secondary school) then determines acceptability in the usual way and after that the Principal (or the Board committee in the case of a senior appointment) decides who is the most suitable applicant for the position. The appointment is announced to the staff in due course.
- 8.2. It is recommended, however, that the position be advertised in the Education Gazette (as a regraded position for which there is no actual vacancy), as this ensures there is a satisfactory paper trail. Even when there is only one potential applicant the process of filling in the S65 form and determining acceptability still needs to be gone through.
- 8.3. Whichever method is used, it is important to do the paperwork and file it appropriately. In some instances schools have found that they do not know which staff members actually hold tagged positions, because proper records were not kept in the past.

9. REASONS FOR TAKING UP TAGGED POSITIONS

- 9.1. Teachers considering taking on a tagged position need to be provided with reasons for doing so, particularly if they are secondary school teachers who do not teach Religious Education. The most important reason is the value of contributing to the Special Character of the school. A second reason could be that it is of significant value for those hoping to continue their career in Catholic education.

10. OTHER ISSUES FOR BOARDS

- 10.1. When making appointments to tagged positions, Boards need to be aware of their responsibility to ensure that the person appointed will be able to model, support and lead the Catholic Special Character of the school to an appropriate degree for the level of the position.
- 10.2. Secondary school appointment committees (or full Boards if appropriate) need to ensure that all the referees named on the S Form are contacted, preferably by phone not just in writing, and that any points of uncertainty have been further clarified with the applicant if necessary. It is wise to ask for help from the diocesan office or the Proprietor when framing questions to ask referees and applicants in relation to their ability to carry out the requirements of a tagged position.

- 10.3. Members of boards of primary schools need to be aware that it is inappropriate and unwise to discuss with applicants any reasons why they may not have been considered acceptable for a position. Acceptability is determined by the diocesan office on behalf of the Proprietor, and diocesan staff will discuss issues of acceptability with the applicant if necessary.

- 10.4. Boards of both primary and secondary schools are reminded to ensure that there is a Proprietor's Appointee on the Appointments Committee. This is a requirement in law. Further information is to be found in the *Handbook for Boards of Trustees of New Zealand Catholic Integrated Schools*, Part 4, in particular 4.1.8.1.

Approved by Bishops
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NZCEO
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