



The Edmund Rice  Schools Trust

CHARTER

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Vision

Promoting
full personal and social development
in caring Christian communities
of learning and teaching

Mission

To provide Catholic education
in the Edmund Rice tradition



Introduction

Edmund Rice was that rare combination – a creative visionary who was also immensely practical. From the humble beginnings of the first such school in Waterford in 1802, Edmund Rice Schools have played an important role in the history of Irish education for over two centuries. Today there are over a hundred of these schools in Ireland, and the Edmund Rice mission has extended to all five continents.

Who will ever measure all the good that has come from the spiritual insight, warm heart and determined faith of Blessed Edmund Ignatius Rice? Once more Ireland has given the Church and the world a striking testimony of complete fidelity to Christ: ‘Keep doing all the things that you have been taught by him ... Then the God of peace will be with you.’ (cf Phil 4:9)

Beatification message of Pope John Paul 2, Sunday, 6th October, 1996

At the start of the new Millennium, the Christian Brothers founded by Blessed Edmund Rice decided to hand on responsibility for the schools to a group of lay people. The Edmund Rice Schools Trust (ERST) was established to hold the schools in trust so that they may continue to provide Catholic

education into the future for the people of Ireland. This pioneering decision marked the opening of a new and significant chapter in the history of the schools.

The process whereby lay people would take on responsibility for the schools was carefully planned during a long period of discernment. The lively and active participation of the students, staff, parents, trustees and boards of management of the schools over a four year period from 1999 to 2003 in an Identity Project was a vital part of this preparatory phase. Through reflection, and sharing, the school partners sought to reach consensus on what comprises the heart and soul of an Edmund Rice School.

They considered questions such as:

- What does it mean today to be a school working in the name of Jesus Christ, of the Catholic Church and in the tradition of Edmund Rice?
- What is special about the educational encounter in Edmund Rice schools?
- What do we place at the centre of that encounter, what do we cherish, what do we cultivate and what do we celebrate?

Key elements that characterise the Edmund Rice School were identified. These elements, along with the 1986 statement of Religious and Educational Philosophy of the Edmund Rice Secondary Schools, have been the inspiration for this Charter.

The Charter sets out a framework designed to enable Catholic education in the Edmund Rice tradition to thrive and grow into the future.

Inspired by the Charter, the men and women invited to hold the schools in trust supply the leadership needed to determine the future direction of the schools. However, the success of ERST depends on the commitment, energy and sense of justice of everyone involved as

partners in the school communities. As the trustees respond to the needs of a changing world, they and the school communities ensure that ERST schools continue to adapt and re-define themselves, while remaining faithful to their mission and founding vision.

It was as lay Catholics that Nano Nagle, Edmund Rice, Catherine McAuley, Mary Aikenhead, and Margaret Aylward, among others, established their first schools. ERST is radical in the sense of a return to roots, a return to the idea also repeatedly emphasised in the Second Vatican Council, that lay people are called to play a full part in the mission of the church and the evangelisation of the world.

On all Christians ... rests the noble obligation of working to bring people throughout the whole world to hear and accept the divine message of salvation.

Vatican II – Decree on the Apostolate of Lay People, 3. (1965)

In handing over their schools to the Edmund Rice Schools Trust, the Christian Brothers have placed their confidence in a group of people who are deeply conscious of the great heritage of these schools. Faithful to the Church and inspired by Edmund Rice's vision, these people ensure the future of the schools as Christian communities dedicated to learning and excellence.



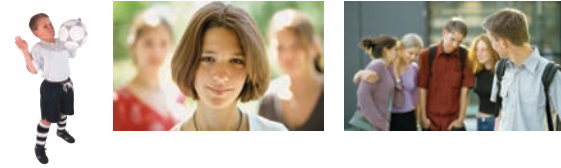
A Proud Tradition Moving Forward



Edmund Rice's first school in Waterford was in a renovated stable, and he lived in the spartan loft upstairs. His new lodgings were in stark contrast to his former life as a successful and wealthy businessman. However, for Edmund, this decision was the fruit of a long period of prayer and reflection. More than a decade before, his beloved wife Mary had died after giving birth to a daughter with special needs. Having ensured proper care for his daughter, he turned his attention to how he should spend the rest of his life. He had always been a benefactor to the poor, but now he decided to dedicate his whole life to their welfare. The Presentation Sisters were already educating girls and he sought to provide a similar service for boys. His first care was for the boys' spiritual well-being, but for him there was no artificial separation between the spiritual and the practical. As well as educating boys who were often wild and unruly, he also set up a bakery and tailor's shop to feed and clothe them.

Inspired by his vision and mission, many volunteers joined him, and together they formed a community of Religious Brothers based on deep faith, love of neighbour, and the pursuit of justice. Soon, other communities and schools were established throughout the country to further the same mission.

Edmund's life, lived in fidelity to the Gospel, continues today to inspire people in the network of schools that now stretches across five continents. Originally, the schools were for boys only, but in more recent years girls have been attending some of the schools, and this welcome trend will become more common in the future.



Edmund Rice Schools in Ireland have been recognised for their important contribution to the birth and growth of a sense of national identity, not least through their tireless promotion of the Irish language, culture and games. The Brothers and lay staffs of these schools have educated many of the founders of the State and leaders of modern Ireland.

However, some have failed to live up to the visionary ideals of Edmund Rice. Conscious of the hurt and pain caused by these failures, those who now follow in his footsteps have learned from these experiences and seek to live out his founding vision with renewed commitment.

Edmund Rice schools cater for young people from a diverse range of backgrounds and have been quick to respond to the emerging needs of students and communities. The educational approach in the schools is neither functional nor utilitarian, but subscribes to the holistic vision expressed in the following five key elements:

- Nurturing faith, Christian spirituality and Gospel-based values;
- Promoting partnership;
- Excelling in teaching and learning;
- Creating a caring school community;
- Inspiring transformational leadership.



The Five Key Elements of the Edmund Rice School

The school communities have identified these elements as the essential ways in which the founding vision is realised in practice in each school. They represent a commitment to wisdom as well as knowledge. While all the elements are important, the emphasis placed on each one may vary according to the local and social context of each school and the community it serves.

The spirit of the Charter also calls on each individual school to identify other key values that are particular to it, to its tradition and to emerging local needs, and to work on sustaining and developing those values.

God loves nothing so much as the person who lives with wisdom.

Wisdom 7:28

This Charter provides the guiding principles against which all schools and communities of learning in the Edmund Rice network will assess themselves.

Christ is the foundation of the whole education enterprise in a Catholic school. *The Catholic School, Rome, 1977.*

- Nurturing faith, Christian spirituality and Gospel-based values;
- Promoting partnership in the school community
- Excelling in teaching and learning;
- Creating a caring school community;
- Inspiring transformational leadership.

Nurturing Faith, Christian Spirituality and Gospel-

Edmund Rice Schools in partnership with the home and the parish are dedicated to providing and developing a Catholic education that cultivates a living faith, fosters Christian spirituality, and educates people in Gospel-based values.

An Edmund Rice School:

● Is faithful to the life of Jesus Christ

Catholic education is a ministry based on Jesus Christ's vision for humanity as expressed in his living and teaching. Christ came that we 'might have life, and have it to the full.' (John 10:10). The life-journey of each person has the potential to be transformed by a personal understanding of and relationship with the life-journey of Jesus.



● Develops the whole person

The Edmund Rice School offers balanced, integrated and innovative teaching and learning experiences. It recognises that the human person has, for example, personal, physical, intellectual, social, spiritual, moral, emotional and aesthetic dimensions and seeks to promote the student's development in all these areas.



● Promotes a distinctive spirituality

The Edmund Rice School – in partnership with the home and the parish – seeks to nurture and encourage a distinctive Christian spirituality. Religious education and practice is shaped to a significant extent by the desire to promote growth in spirituality. The spiritual life of each person is developed through reflection, prayer, the sacraments, liturgy, symbols, religious art and music, sacred stories and other rituals, and the services of the school chaplaincy. Celebration of the Eucharist as a school community is a nourishing, living expression of shared faith.



based Values

A school is not only a place where one is given a choice of intellectual values, but a place where one has presented an array of values which are actively lived. The school must be a community whose values are communicated through the interpersonal and sincere relationships of its members and through both individual and corporate adherence to the outlook on life that permeates the school.

Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education. Catholic Schools (1977).

● Celebrates diversity and values difference

The Edmund Rice School welcomes students of different Christian denominations and of other religious faiths. It encourages them to grow in their own faith and religious practice while at the same time respecting the distinctive Catholic ethos of the school. It celebrates the richness and diversity of the school community.

● Fosters a living faith through working for social and ecological justice

An awareness of social issues and action for social justice permeate the entire curriculum of the Edmund Rice School. A concern for social justice cannot be divorced from a concern for ecological justice. Environmental and justice issues are intertwined in how humans are called to relate to God's creation. Major challenges face humanity, including environmental degradation, limits to material resources, and threats to bio-diversity. The Edmund Rice School encourages the whole school community to work for social and ecological justice in the school and in society generally. The school provides opportunities for people to live their faith by engaging in community and voluntary work and in immersion projects in Ireland and in the Developing World.

● Celebrates Mary as model of faithfulness

Edmund Rice had a great love for Mary the Mother of Jesus who has always been seen as a model of discipleship and the tradition of venerating her has always been strong in Edmund Rice schools. This Charter challenges the school partners to be like Mary, faithful followers of the way of Jesus.

● Prioritises resources

Because of its mission, the Edmund Rice School gives priority to religious education, spirituality, pastoral care and action for social and eco-justice in the allocation of human and other resources.

The partnership that characterises the Edmund Rice School promotes inclusiveness, mutual respect and a sense of inter-dependence for the development of the school as a community where personal growth is facilitated. It fosters a wide network of relationships and is deeply Christian.

Promoting Partnership in the School Community

An Edmund Rice School: ● Recognises the value of partnership

The Edmund Rice School is a welcoming community, where people are actively involved, their views are valued and their contribution is affirmed as they learn and grow together. Working together as partners improves the quality and effectiveness of the school. A spirit of partnership makes it easier to implement decisions and actions needed to achieve excellence.

● Works in partnership with parents/guardians

Because parents/guardians have the primary responsibility for the education of their children, they are key partners in the school community. Regular consultation and communication between schools and parents/guardians, active participation of parents/guardians in their child's education and involvement in specific school activities are all crucial to establishing effective home, school and community links.

● Seeks to build community

Community lives and grows where people share a common vision and mission, feel they belong, are allowed to contribute, are recognised and consulted and have a say in determining their direction. Partnership enables the Edmund Rice School – management, parents, teachers, support staff and students – to grow in a shared, collegial vision of education, giving all involved a real sense that the school 'belongs' to them.



● Embodies the principles of inclusiveness

Engagement with others and inclusiveness are hallmarks of a partnership that respects and celebrates diversity of culture, race and creed. The Edmund Rice school reaches out to those who may feel excluded.

● Respects the earth

Earth sustains human beings and a myriad of other creatures of all kinds. Education leads people to an awareness of their interconnectedness with the earth and their place in the cosmos. Living in harmony with all of creation, respect and care for the environment, concern when it is threatened with destruction, and excitement in discovering the wonders of the universe are all encouraged. Celebrating the gifts of God in creation and giving thanks for them in prayer and liturgy are valued in the Edmund Rice School.



- **Fosters a sense of belonging to parish**

The Edmund Rice School collaborates and interacts with the many communities and agencies that are essential to the life of the school. It works in partnership with the parish in which it is located and with the other parishes and schools of its catchment area.

- **Promotes networking**

The Edmund Rice School maintains links with various educational, cultural and sporting associations and with religious, charitable and justice organisations. It values its links with the Edmund Rice Network worldwide and assists in the Network's involvement in the Developing World. It supports the Church in its worldwide outreach.

The faith of children is best nurtured when home, school and parish work together in partnership.

Irish Bishops' Pastoral Nurturing Our Children's Faith – 2006.

The lay catholic educator is a person who exercises a specific mission in the Church ... To this lay person, as a member of this community, the family and the Church entrust the school's educational endeavour... Lay teachers must be profoundly convinced that they share in the sanctifying, and therefore educational mission of the Church...

Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education. Lay Catholics in Schools: Witnesses to Faith, 24. (1982)

The Edmund Rice School is a community of people dedicated to the pursuit of excellence in all its endeavours and in all aspects of its teaching and learning.

Excelling in Teaching and Learning

An Edmund Rice School: ● **Focuses on purposeful teaching and learning**

Purposeful teaching and learning provide the central focus of a successful and happy school. Such an educational model is characterised by high expectations, inspiring and innovative teaching and learning methodologies, together with regular evaluation. The creation of an orderly, safe and positive learning environment enables the Edmund Rice School to attain excellence in all dimensions of education.

● **Nurtures the holistic development of students**

The school nurtures the full potential of students, so that they may be healthy both in mind and body. It recognises the need for spiritual growth and an informed conscience. It aims to help students become better people who relate well to others and who have a keen appreciation of beauty. The lifelong process of becoming active citizens who work for justice begins in practical ways in school.

● **Recognises the uniqueness of every student**

Students are helped to grow through educational processes that are sensitive to their developmental stages and their social and cultural backgrounds. The Edmund Rice School designs an educational environment that respects and facilitates different types of intelligence and learning styles.

In fulfilling her mission on behalf of the human family, the Church is a willing partner in that deep and respectful dialogue between science and faith which makes us all servants of the truth which sets us free.

Pope John Paul II to members of the American Philosophical Society and the Italian 'Accademia dei Lincei', 21 May 1996.

- **Promotes personal and professional development**
Members of boards of management, governors, principals, staff and all members of the school community are encouraged to engage in ongoing personal and professional development so as to enhance their own lives and the educational environment in their schools.
- **Raises awareness of the interconnectedness of world in which we live**
The Edmund Rice School raises awareness about the universe of which we are a part, the earth in which we live and about the diversity of race and religion that characterises our world and our schools today. It prepares pupils to be confident about their identity and to be respectful of others, while also giving them a sense of belonging to a wider Irish, European and global community.
- **Uses information technology with critical awareness**
The Edmund Rice School incorporates up-to-date information technologies in its methods of teaching and learning and ensures that students are critically aware of the creative opportunities and challenges presented by new technologies.
- **Responds to a changing world**
The Edmund Rice School responds to the evolving needs of the students in a changing world through ongoing review, evaluation and assessment and by engaging with best educational practice.

**Glory be to him
whose power, working in us,
can do infinitely more
than we can ask for or imagine.**

Ephesians 3:20

The hallmarks of an Edmund Rice school are care, especially for those who are vulnerable or disadvantaged in any way, and action for social and ecological justice.

Creating a Caring School Community

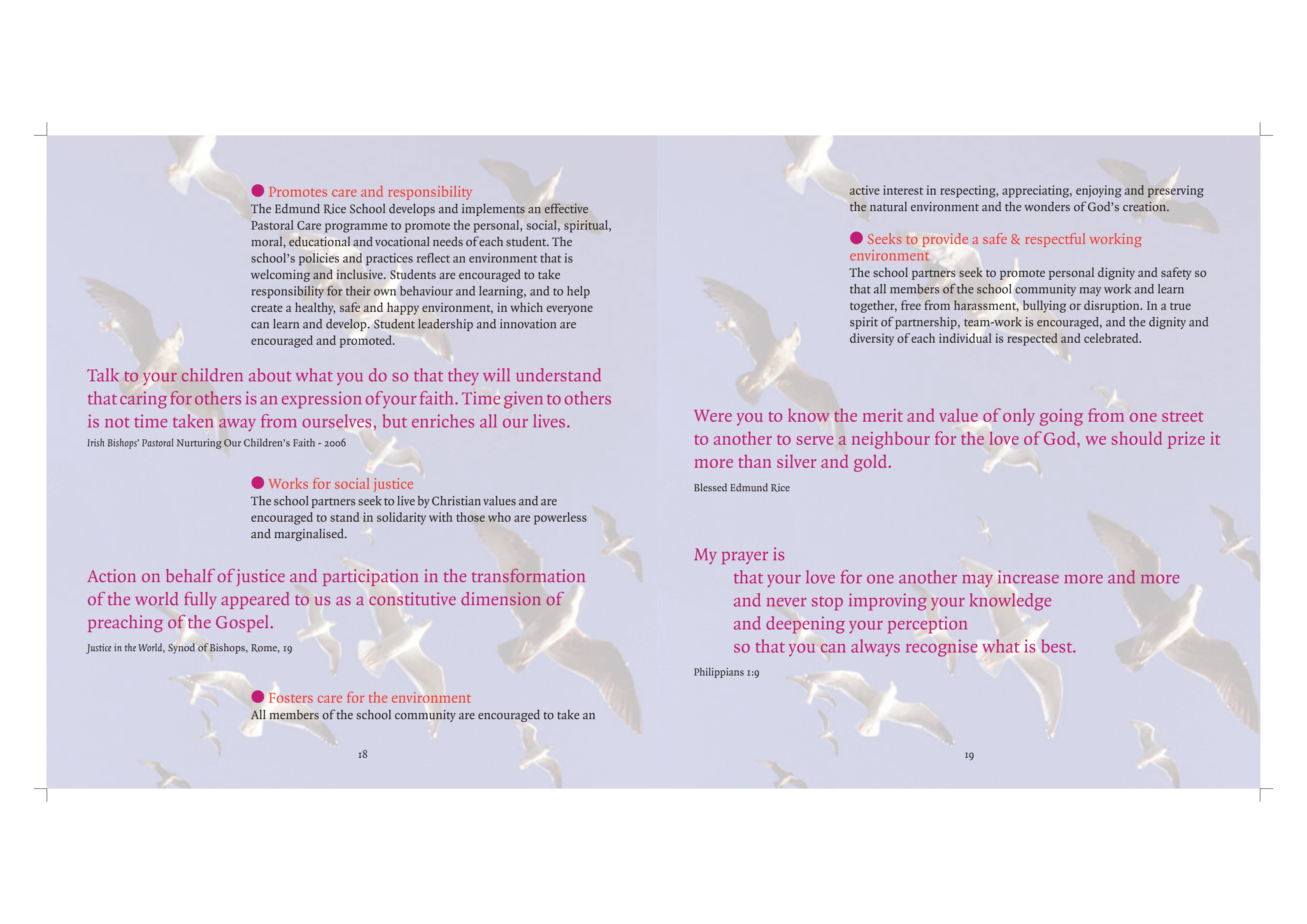


An Edmund Rice School: ● **Develops a sense of community**

The Edmund Rice School fosters in its members the sense of care, compassion and community that characterised Jesus' life. These values are reflected in the quality of relationships between all the school partners, and in every interaction between the school and outside agencies and communities.

● **Identifies and serves the needs of students**

The Edmund Rice School recognises the uniqueness of each individual. It identifies the educational needs of each student and puts in place appropriate resources, curricula, programmes and methodologies to enable everyone to achieve his/her full potential. Gifted children and students with learning difficulties in a particular subject are supported, while students with other special educational needs are welcomed and provided with special assistance in so far as is practicable. There is breadth and balance in the curriculum, while an extensive range of extra-curricular activities encourages participation and positive relationships, a healthy lifestyle and the holistic development of the person.



● **Promotes care and responsibility**

The Edmund Rice School develops and implements an effective Pastoral Care programme to promote the personal, social, spiritual, moral, educational and vocational needs of each student. The school's policies and practices reflect an environment that is welcoming and inclusive. Students are encouraged to take responsibility for their own behaviour and learning, and to help create a healthy, safe and happy environment, in which everyone can learn and develop. Student leadership and innovation are encouraged and promoted.

Talk to your children about what you do so that they will understand that caring for others is an expression of your faith. Time given to others is not time taken away from ourselves, but enriches all our lives.

Irish Bishops' Pastoral Nurturing Our Children's Faith - 2006

● **Works for social justice**

The school partners seek to live by Christian values and are encouraged to stand in solidarity with those who are powerless and marginalised.

Action on behalf of justice and participation in the transformation of the world fully appeared to us as a constitutive dimension of preaching of the Gospel.

Justice in the World, Synod of Bishops, Rome, 19

● **Fosters care for the environment**

All members of the school community are encouraged to take an

active interest in respecting, appreciating, enjoying and preserving the natural environment and the wonders of God's creation.

● **Seeks to provide a safe & respectful working environment**

The school partners seek to promote personal dignity and safety so that all members of the school community may work and learn together, free from harassment, bullying or disruption. In a true spirit of partnership, team-work is encouraged, and the dignity and diversity of each individual is respected and celebrated.

Were you to know the merit and value of only going from one street to another to serve a neighbour for the love of God, we should prize it more than silver and gold.

Blessed Edmund Rice

My prayer is

that your love for one another may increase more and more and never stop improving your knowledge and deepening your perception so that you can always recognise what is best.

Philippians 1:9

Inspiring Transformational Leadership

School leaders articulate a vision for their school in keeping with the Edmund Rice tradition. They inspire minds and hearts, raise critical consciousness and cultivate a strong work ethic coupled with an enterprising spirit.

- **Fosters visionary leadership**

Outstanding leaders have a vision for their school – a clear picture of a preferred future – that motivates staff, parents and students to develop, to share and to own the vision so that it permeates all facets of school life. The purpose is to inspire people to think about what the school community needs in order to thrive and grow. This vision is translated into practical actions to transform structures and systems for everyone's benefit.

- **Encourages ownership of the vision**

In their commitment to leadership, all members of the school community – the Board of Management, parents, staff and students – take ownership of the vision so that it becomes a reality in their school.

- **Shares leadership roles**

The Board of Management governs the school on behalf of the Trustees. The day-to-day management, which calls for special leadership skills, is delegated to the Principal, who consults where appropriate and assigns tasks to his/her team. Leadership may be assigned or delegated to, shared with or inspired in others. Some aspect of leadership pertains to every member of the school community.



- **Encourages the active participation of parent/guardians**

As a parent himself, Edmund Rice recognised that parents/guardians (as family and community leaders) have a crucial role to play in the life of the school and in the education and welfare of their children. The active engagement of parents/ guardians is central to the student's educational development.

- **Welcomes innovative leadership of teachers**

Inspirational leadership by teachers in the classroom, in extra-curricular activities, and in a great variety of other activities helps the school to achieve the excellence to which it is committed.

- **Elicits leadership and responsibility in students**

The student takes responsibility for his/her own learning, development and behaviour and displays leadership in many very active ways in the school, in the local community and through the Students' Council.

- **Promotes spiritual and moral values**

School leaders, staff and members of the school community promote and exemplify spiritual and moral values and ensure that the school operates according to the religious and educational philosophy outlined in the Charter.

● **Inspires courage and confidence**

Leaders require courage in responding to a changing world. They act as role models and provide leadership by inspiring confidence, gaining acceptance and bringing people with them towards a better future.

● **Encourages a work ethos and innovation**

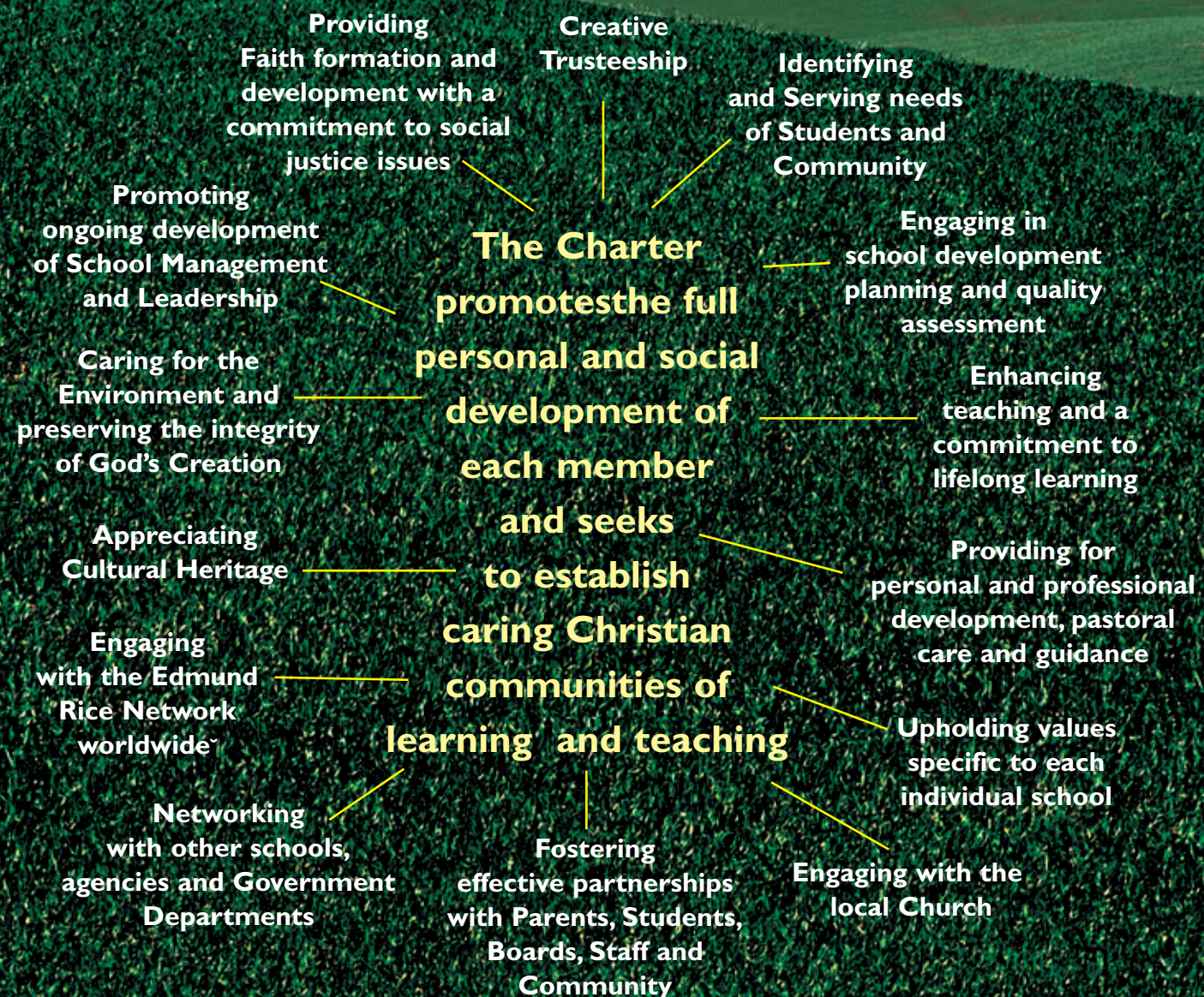
The Edmund Rice School encourages a spirit of creativity and innovation. It promotes a disciplined work ethos and rewards initiative. It seeks to assist students to develop their talents and skills for the benefit of all. The school acknowledges, affirms and appreciates the genuine efforts and endeavours of the entire school community to make it a better place for everyone.

This is what Yahweh asks of you: only this,
to act justly
to love tenderly
and to walk humbly with your God. Micah 6:8

Have courage; the good seed will grow up in the children's hearts later on. Blessed Edmund Rice

Your light must shine in the sight of people, so that, seeing your good works, they may give the praise to your Father in heaven. Matthew, 5:16

The Charter in action



The Challenge of the Charter

We are gifted with the charism of Edmund, our founder, and we are responsible for nurturing it. Empowered by the Holy Spirit we share this gift with all our brothers and sisters, but especially with the poor, the powerless and the oppressed.

Constitutions of the Congregation of Christian Brothers.

The will of God be done in this and everything we undertake.

Blessed Edmund Rice.

Each Edmund Rice School seeks to interpret faithfully the mission of Jesus Christ and the charism of Edmund Rice in its educational community according to this Charter.

The Charter seeks to inspire and to challenge the whole school community to work with a shared vision and in a true spirit of Christian partnership. Its objective is to enhance the education and development of the students while also supporting the professional and personal growth of all who work in the schools.

The Charter provides the guiding principles against which each school community measures its mission, performance and priorities. It is used by the schools to reflect regularly on their performance, to celebrate achievements, to recognise developmental needs and to re-commit to the spirit of the Gospel.

Whole-school review and development planning, consultation and motivation, personal and professional growth, and fostering partnerships are all key to enhancing the schools as centres of excellence and Christian communities of learning.

As a Charter that challenges current reality and practice in the schools, it will continue to evolve through constant careful review and reflection. As the demands of changing times are experienced and interpreted the Charter must always remain faithful to Gospel values.

Reflecting a desire to nurture the full development of every member, this Charter will help to ensure that the schools will continue to be places of hope, happiness, courage and honest struggle, where everyone is valued and respected and where the mission of the Edmund Rice Schools Trust is realised.