



BREAKOUT SESSION

Question 1:

How does Fr Gleeson's sharing mirror what is happening (or not happening) in Singapore's Catholic schools today?

Happening	Not happening
Inclusiveness	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welcome all regardless of background • La Salle map of faith, service and community is a song-tune that is happening in our schools • Time allocated to listen to every child • Focus on students on the periphery and special needs • See the face of God in each pupil • Pupils are the focus • Cater to children with different gifts • Mixed ability classrooms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non-Catholics not welcomed in RME, masses or other Catholic activities • "Walking with each other"- meeting students where they are needs to be done better • Not enough compassion for students
Values	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teaching of Gospel values and students' character development • School values emphasised as central themes for education • Holistic education • Integration of Catholic ethos and curriculum • Culture of care and compassion • Using stories and parables to transmit values • Community building • Giving affirmation especially to those who need it most 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Values not internalized • Wrong values projected

Happening	Not happening
Religious activities	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moments for prayers / reflections; RE lessons; meditation; penitential service; mass celebration • God-centredness • Physical infrastructure (grotto, names of school blocks) • Presence of religious Brothers • Signature Catholic programmes to cater to student profile of the different Catholic schools 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not enough opportunities / time for Catholic pupils to deepen faith in school • Pupils may find Catholic programmes not relevant or too abstract • Formation and journey with the students on their understanding of the Catholic faith • Apologetic about faith • Conversations about Catholic practices • Lack of a Catholic brand
Teachers	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Serve as role models • Believe that education is transformation of hearts and minds • Catholic teachers are encouraged to teach in Catholic schools 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not enough role models • Not enough Catholic teachers • Lack of support from teachers to sustain practices to promote Catholic faith; not all Catholic staff attend the prescribed programmes • Quality of teaching has to be deeper • Proclamation of Christ not proclaimed explicitly and openly • Heavy workload causes a lack of time and energy to be like Jesus / encounter Jesus • High turnover rate • Faith formation for staff
Leadership	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong support for Catholic identity and faith formation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers and leaders seem to be neglected in formation programmes • Support from key personnel and supervisors • Not all principals are Catholic • School leaders are cautious • Discerned decision-making not visible • Principals coming together to share best practices
Secular state	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multi-faith population makes assertion of a Catholic ethos challenging; Sensitivity of religious issues • Not enough emphasis on Catholic identity • Dialogue school not possible because State is secular
Priority on academic excellence	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Task-oriented • Catechism is lower priority • Masses after school hours (instead of during curriculum time)

Happening	Not happening
Infrastructure	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overly large class size means being unable to listen to all students • Religion is secondary • Lack of time
Church	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No proactive support from church
Parents	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of support from parents

Question 2:

What are some of the KEY characteristics that have been very successfully nurtured to identify our schools as Catholic?

Inclusiveness
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Catholic teaching is not compartmentalised but permeates all facets of the school • Dialogue school that promotes universality • Inclusive, caring culture • Everyone prays in his/her own way • Emphasis on helping the marginalised in our society
Values
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Values are reinforced during teachable moments • Emphasis on service and other-centredness • Values education / Religious education
Religious activities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prayers; prayer leaders in classroom to start each lesson with prayer • Catholic feast days and practices (e.g. penitential service, mass, Catholic students' ministry, YCS, Legion of Mary) • Catechism / moral education • Values education (based on Founder) • Biblical values / teachings are merged into curriculum • History, heritage and charisma of school • Christ / God-centred mission and philosophy • Artefacts (e.g. statues)
Teachers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Willing to go the extra mile for the students • Staff bonding and interaction • Staff and students look out for each other • Strong presence of the Religious • Good role models

Leadership

- Servant leadership

Parents

- Parent support groups
- Involvement of parents (e.g. rosary sessions)



Question 3:

What challenges do we face in operationalising what Fr Gleeson shared and discussed?

Students

- Students come from different backgrounds

Teachers

- Need for more young Catholic teachers to continue leadership in our Catholic schools
- Insufficient Catholic teachers
- Teachers to be good listeners
- Depth of relationship with Christ and others; lack of witnessing; misalignment of faith and reason
- Teachers don't get the necessary input ("You cannot impart what you do not have")
- Demanding curriculum / responsibilities; seen as additional workload
- Dissonance between private and public lives of teachers

Infrastructure

- Time constraint (to witness, to serve, to prepare teaching resources)
- Emphasis on academic excellence; RE not a priority
- Merging of MOE and church curriculum
- Lack of chaplaincy team and lack of support for them
- Environment not supportive
- Funding (suggest one resource person between affiliated schools to capitalise on economies of scale)
- Balance between common space and Catholic spirituality
- Complexities of staffing and deployment
- Buy-in from the whole school on Catholic ethos
- Limitations specified by MOE regarding overt display of religious practices
- Continuity of Catholic education up to JC level

Are our Catholic schools able to stand up without being afraid to compromise on our vision of Catholic education?

Parents

- Lack of support from parents (e.g. parents request that their children not participate in religious activities)
- Not enough parent volunteers



Question 4:

What challenges do we want to take up to help our schools realise their Catholic identity? What do we need to make this happen?

Religious climate

- Share list of Catholic vendors for talks, retreats and customised curriculum
- Separate team to work on merging Catholic and MOE curriculum
- Continue with school Catholic programmes
- Activities (e.g. movies, Catholic Youth Rally, sharing of bible stories)
- Strengthen formation of Catholic students

Teachers

- Improve teacher formation (e.g. retreat)
- Consistency in practices by Catholic teachers
- One-to-one spiritual accompaniment for teachers
- Stronger presence of the Religious

Leadership

- Appoint more Catholic principals and teachers who can be good role models
- Leaders to set the tone, lead by example
- More experienced school leaders to share with newer school leaders
- New definition of excellence

Infrastructure

- Balance of academic and spiritual
- Catholic education to be an explicit priority
- Create a Catholic brand
- Use of the 10 Guiding Principles of the Social Teachings of the Church
- Have conversations with other stake holders and religious bodies (e.g. MOE, Mufti)
- Deliberately create a dialogue school; sharing of personal encounters / experiences
- Chaplaincy team can be made up of lay people
- Outsource Catholic activities

Parents

- Strengthen home-school partnership
- Demands from parents
- Non-Catholic parents to be advised on school policies where Catholicism is concerned

Church

- Church can play greater role by reaching out to Catholic teachers
- Funding from Church
- Archbishop to give clear direction and focus
- Support schools through dialogue, being present, perhaps even work with MOE