

*Diocese of Leeds - Catechesis and Religious Education Service*  
**Questionnaire on Preparation and Catechesis for  
First Sacraments: Eucharist and Reconciliation**

1. **Parishes:** Replies from 37 parish priests

2. **As parish priest, what is your involvement in preparation for First Sacraments?**

- Oversight - involvement with parent support
- Oversight/guidance/input on catechesis
- Oversight - 9
- Guidance - 2
- Catechesis - 1
- Oversight/guidance/catechesis - 4
- Guidance of catechists. Liturgical celebrations
- Oversight/guidance - 5
- Preparation Masses & administering FS - 1
- Oversight, talks to parents
- General oversight
- Talking to parents at formal sessions
- I see the children often at the end of their sessions and frequently visit them at school. We have a class benediction before Holy Communion.
- Preparation of timetable; talks to parents & children
- Preparation is school and parish based. 12 instruction classes on Sun during 10am Mass in separate room. Daily instruction in school. PP takes class for  $\frac{1}{2}$  hour each week in school.
- Oversight/administration/guidance
- I meet with the children but I am not a catechist. I do lead 2 sessions with the parents.
- Co-ordinator
- I have put FS back into school. I work out the programme with the deputy head who runs it.
- Guidance & catechesis
- We have so few children I do it all
- 3 sessions with parents; 7 'I Belong' masses; support for catechists.

3. **What is the involvement of an assistant priest/deacon/parish sister?**

- Assistant co-ordinates clergy with catechists and gives support/talks where necessary. Arranges/supervises liturgies.
- Deacon - oversight & guidance
- Deacon - 2/3 sessions with parents
- Deacon - Catechist

## Catechists: Who is involved?

### 4. Is there a parish co-ordinator for First Sacraments Catechesis?

YES - 24                      NO - 8                      PP & Catechist - 1      PP - 4

- Only 1 candidate last year, none this year, maybe one next year who will probably join in the programme at neighbouring parish

### 5. Are there other catechists involved? If so, please give the following details:

| How many? | What is their experience and training?  | How many years have they been involved? |
|-----------|---|---|
| • 5       | • Committed & active Catholics/Work as a team   | • 1, 1, 4, 6 years                      |
| • 3       | •   | • Many                                  |
| • 1       | •   | •                                       |
| • 2       | • No formal training as a catechist, but has been a primary teacher for 17 years. Training & experience in youth work | • 3, 3                                  |
| • 2       | •   | •                                       |
| • 2       | • Ex-teacher  | • 7 +                                   |
| • 2       | • Retired teachers  | • 6, 6                                  |
| • 3       | • 2 Teachers & retired teacher  | • 8,8,4                                 |
| • 5       | • 2 catechists, Y3 teacher, RE co-ordinator, religious sister,  | • 8, 10+, 4, 10, 1                      |
| • 2       | • 18 years as teacher in RC primary   | • 1                                     |
| • 2       | • Mother, Head of Pre-School, Diocesan training evenings  | • 2 at least                            |
| • 3       | • Experience. Applied Theology, Maryvale  | • 14 years. Just started                |
| • 6       | • Hands-on  | • 10 - 1 years                          |
| • 1       | • None  | • Just started                          |
| • 3       | • Primary teachers, parent  | • 3, 2                                  |
| • 2       | • School teacher & Head teacher   | •                                       |
| • 1       | •   | •                                       |
| • 2       | • Little  | • 1, 1                                  |
| • 3       | • PP, Retired HT, School Governor   | • 20, 2                                 |
| • 3       | • Retired Head of RE/VC of Liturgy Commission, Deputy head primary, teacher   | • 2, Several, first year                |
| • 6       | •   | •                                       |
| • 3       | • Experience & diocesan training  | • Many                                  |
| • 3       | • One is a Catholic teacher   | • 5,5,5                                 |
| • 2       | • Primary classroom assist, Diaconal training, parent & grandparent   | • 2,5                                   |
| • 4       | • Religious sister, NQT, CLOW catechist   | • Several, 1,2                          |

|     |  |                   |
|-----|--|-------------------|
| • 3 | • Trained teachers                     | • At least 5 each |
| • 4 | • 3 Primary Teachers, 1 supply teacher | • 7               |
| • 3 | • 2 primary teachers                   | • Approx 6        |

## 6. In what ways are catechists involved in preparation for First Sacraments?

- Ten monthly sessions, each preceded by a 1 1/2 - 2 hr team planning meeting. Participation in parents' meetings.
- Take children after school one day each week and on Sat before evening Mass.
- Take children and parents through scheme. Help to prepare children for both sacraments.
- PP & catechists prepare the children together
- With children & parents
- Sundays for 30 mins, during mass, using material.
- Come into school and take groups using 'I Belong'. Involved in parents meetings & liturgies in preparation for FS
- Weekly meetings held for parents & children
- Children's Liturgy at 9.30 Mass
- Training sessions with children, CLOW
- Totally, all the way through the programme
- Participates in parent talks and takes each session with the children.
- Almost absolutely. They manage all sessions
- Leads all catechesis
- Meet on a rota basis with FHC children on a Tues evening from 5-6pm
- Course work
- Take Sun class during 10am Mass. 12 lessons given on Sun: 6 on FR/6 on FE
- One works with PP & parents. Two work with children
- Fully involved in all aspects of catechesis from teaching to the actual celebration
- Programme is split equally between school & parish
- They do most of the parish preparation
- Administration and catechesis
- Preparation
- Catechists teach the children the basis for and the meaning of the sacraments and then assist them by journeying with them through example and prayer.
- When FS went back into school the PP kept on the catechists to lead groups for the parent evenings that he ran. They were of little use even at this. The PP was not impressed by their ability to run a programme.
- Talking to the children & setting an example
- They direct & co-ordinate the whole programme
- Preparation is carried out by the parents for each year under the direction of the chief catechist.

- Work in groups with children, usually 7 sessions using I Belong. They are responsible for one of the preparation masses with their group.
- Catechists prepare sessions & conduct them. Meet with parents to re-enforce parental involvement & homework for children.

**7. In what ways are clergy and catechists supported?  
(parish/deanery/diocese?)**

- Clergy support catechists. Children participate in parish Sunday masses over the course of the programme to be presented to the parish. Catechists try to send rep to Diocesan training.
- Parish supports catechists.
- Not
- Support from Mrs Pennington for parents meetings
- Catechists attend courses. They have planning meetings on a regular basis.
- Parishioners sponsor a child, diocesan training evenings.
- Catechetical training sessions led by diocesan education services
- By one another
- Parish prayer groups
- PP & catechist work closely together
- Excellent support from PP both with children & catechists
- Nothing in Huddersfield
- PP works closely with catechists and provides materials.
- Support is available from the Diocese; some of the catechists have been on courses at HH. There are now moves within the Deanery to share info and resources.
- Parish & diocese
- Catechist supported by PP. No other support except courses offered by Diocese
- They have the prayers and good will of the parish and parents. No great support is needed otherwise they should not be involved in the programme.
- Good partnership between parish & school
- Parish/deanery doesn't really apply to my circumstances
- We have always run our own catechetical course and on occasion asked advice from diocese.
- I suspect that there is plenty of material & courses on offer but it is difficult to recruit long-term catechists. Most are parents of children involved but do not persist from year to year.
- Candidates are presented to the parish at the beginning & on Sun prior to FHC. Photos on display in narthex & parishioners invited to pray for candidates. No support from deanery apart from one priest helping with FR. Not aware of any support from diocese.

## **8. What further help and support for clergy and catechists is needed?**

- Encouragement in recruiting new catechists. Encouragement from Diocese for CLOW leaders to move onto First Sacraments.
- Clarification of whole policy of who does what, where & when. So much divergence within the Diocese.
- I found the meeting at Cottingley helpful and think that it was a good idea for information sharing.
- Help to help the parents
- More catechists - demanding and time consuming work
- Inset days - training in own parish
- Decent theologically sound programmes. Sessions for parents on a local/deanery level. Prayer materials for prayer sponsors.
- We'll assess this at the end of this session - first year for both of us.
- None - 5
- None that I can think of. I have an excellent team.
- Further development at Deanery level.
- None that I can think of - it seems to work well.
- Specific promotion/presentation of resources on First sacraments including theology
- We do need help to move us forward in our preparation programme. A new programme is needed.
- Things seem to run very smoothly
- A strong back up from schools for what we try & teach
- We must be careful to avoid 'overkill'. Parents will help their children, school is v. helpful and parish co-ordinates a basic programme. Example is probably the best teacher.

### **Preparation: What programmes are used?**

## **9. What catechetical programme/s do you use?**

### **Programmes**

- God's Greatest Gift - 5
- Own parish programme - 1
- We Celebrate the Eucharist/Gold Book - 5
- I Belong - 10
- The Diocesan Schools Syllabus
- Called to his Supper/Making Things Right - 5
- Sr Mary Bernard's - St Paul's Church, Shepley; Veritas - In school
- Alive with His Life - 2
- Catechism
- Here I Am
- PP's own worksheets (18 - one side catechetical material for parents & children; other side activity questions & word search)

10. What are the benefits/good points & drawbacks/gaps of the programme?

| Benefits/Good Points   | Drawbacks/Gaps   |
|--|--|
| <p><b>God's Greatest Gift (GGG)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lots of ideas &amp; flexibility</li> <li>• Support materials available for catechists and parents.</li> <li>• Good art materials linking with scheme</li> <li>• Well structured, easy to follow</li> <li>• One book for both sacraments.</li> <li>• Thorough understanding of both sacraments by end of course</li> </ul> <p><b>Own Parish Programme</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can apply to particular needs &amp; situations</li> </ul> <p><b>Gold Book</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gives scripture help</li> <li>• Appreciated by school, parents, children &amp; parish</li> <li>• Excellent text &amp; pictures &amp; opportunity for parental/family participation</li> <li>• It has continuity and is much loved</li> <li>• Catechists are very familiar with it</li> <li>• I think it's a pretty good programme</li> </ul> <p><b>I Belong</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use of scripture</li> <li>• Structure</li> <li>• Presentation is colourful</li> <li>• Mass - based. Right level. Well presented</li> <li>• Child-friendly, children enjoy using it</li> <li>• Suits our situation perfectly. V good method of :<br/>Catechists-parents</li> </ul> | <p><b>God's Greatest Gift</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No link to Here I Am</li> <li>• Too much colouring in</li> </ul> <p><b>Own Parish Programme</b></p> <p><b>Gold Book</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not detailed enough</li> <li>• V. inadequate on sacrifice of the Mass and Real Presence - we add material here.</li> <li>• It is very outdated but some Catechists may resist change</li> </ul> <p><b>I Belong</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sometimes the course can make an area more difficult than necessary eg p.31, Reconciliation, p.94 Eternal Banquet</li> <li>• The same format of colouring, puzzles &amp; blank pages in each chapter is tedious for the children</li> <li>• Have to supplement with other resources for Reconciliation</li> <li>• Differentiation for special needs</li> </ul> |

Catechists-children

Parents-children

- An English programme rather than one developed for another country (USA/Eire)
- Pleasant/easy presentation
- It was the best of a poor choice. The catechists are familiar with it
- Child friendly
- Sufficient scripture
- Up to date pictures & photos
- More colourful than others
- V. positive feedback from parents
- Author of this programme is a catechist in Howden
- Children like books
- Follows the order of mass
- Gives some scripture stories
- Brings together parish/school/families

**Called to His Supper**

- Appropriate for their age
- Books are easy to follow. Children understand all the vocabulary. Activities are easy to follow and complete.
- Children can get involved in discussion about the subjects in the books.
- Stories are pitched at correct level.
- Notes for parents/teachers at the back of Reconciliation book
- Step by step way of making FR & FS

**At His Supper**

- Tackles all areas

**Alive with His Life**

children is not quite so good.

- Lack of parental support - in some cases
- A little light on Reconciliation
- Like many of them it doesn't do much to emphasize the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist
- Books are quite expensive

**Called to His Supper**

- Children having to do it at home. Not many do it and they often forget to bring the books back.
- If a story is mentioned, I read it so they know where it fits in

**At His Supper**

- Bland!
- Open-ended

**Alive with His Life**

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Catechists have teacher's manual. Down to earth, easy to understand. Parents can be involved</li> </ul> <p><b>Here I Am</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Keeps it simple. Best we have at the moment</li> </ul> <p><b>PP's own worksheets</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unashamedly Catholic</li> <li>• Non waffle</li> <li>• Kids love them</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Would be better if the sheets were in a hardback book rather than loose</li> </ul> <p><b>Here I Am</b></p> <p><b>PP's own worksheets</b></p> |
|---|---|

**11. Do you use any additional resources for First Eucharist and/or First Reconciliation?**

- Own resources often used but always following GGG theme
- Own 'Hug of Heaven' resource used for First Reconciliation
- I am preparing for my First Communion (Mordefroid) - 1
- My Book about Forgiveness (CTS) - 1
- Yes - 1
- Sadler Sacrament Programme (Reconciliation & FE)
- CD, Bernadette Farrell, Share the Light
- Children have one session when they are shown round the church and told about the various features etc
- Own Bible with pictures
- Prayer sheets prepared by clergy with standard prayers and formulae to be learnt by all children.
- As FR draws near a separate lesson takes place about the actual day with all catechists & PP
- Bibles, Prayers
- Prayer sheets with all the usual catholic prayers, which each child has to know by heart.
- Special items for FR. 'Blessing-Cup Meal' prior to Easter including families.
- 'Let's go to Mass' (Redemptorist) (for use in Church) presented to all candidates.
- Visual aids. A branch with doves from each child is left in Church after FR
- The catechists try to fill in the gaps
- My own
- There are resources in school. Most of our children do pray Mass with us each week. Celebrating Mass in each classroom helps to develop an understanding.
- Personal knowledge and faith of catechists
- The school may - I don't know

- The CAN Bible for children needs to be read for some worksheets
- If necessary
- Children's lectionary

**12. Is preparation based more in the parish or in the school?**

- Parish - but school supports parental FS links and HIA
- Parish - 13
- Mainly parish guided by school
- Usually half/half - 3
- In school but with special help for parents. Those in non-Catholic schools are prepared in the parish
- School - 4
- Parish - but Reconciliation is covered in the school
- The parish with prayer, support & acknowledgment
- Children who attend the catholic primary - class based; those at other schools in the parish.
- Both - 2
- Parish entirely with home.
- Parish - a little in school - not all children go to Catholic schools.
- Preparation in parish but I presume that they learn things in school
- In school. I assume the Catholic school gives adequate preparation. A booklet is issued to those parents whose children (a minority) are at non-Catholic school
- In school for most of the children plus a small group at the chapel of ease who prepare in the parish. Sessions begin at 3.30 and children from nc schools come along at that time
- School: but both if parents do what they should
- Balanced: sessions on Sunday take place in school
- Bulk of work is done in parish but obviously

**13. At what time of the year does the preparation begin and when are the sacraments of Eucharist and Reconciliation celebrated?**

| Starts   | First Reconciliation  | First Eucharist  |
|--|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Late Sept</li> </ul>  | Early-Mid March   | Sunday closest to SS Peter & Paul  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Christmas</li> <li>• October</li> <li>• Towards end of autumn term</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Prior to Holy Week</li> <li>Lent</li> <li>May</li> </ul>           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Approx to Corpus Christi</li> <li>May</li> <li>May</li> </ul> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sept</li> <li>• Nov</li> <li>• Early spring</li> </ul>                        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Monday of Holy Week</li> <li>March</li> <li>Late summer</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pentecost Sunday</li> <li>May</li> <li>Late summer</li> </ul> |

|                   |                    |  |
|-------------------|--------------------|--|
| • Christmas       | June               | June   |
| • Jan             | Mid Feb            | June   |
| • Jan             | Just before Easter | Last weekend in May                                |
| • Oct             | Feb                | May  |
| • Jan             | May                | June   |
| • Oct             | Advent             | May  |
| • Jan             | March              | May/June   |
| • Nov             | Sat am in Lent     | June   |
| • Before Advent   | Lent               | May  |
| • December        | End of Lent        | Mid-June   |
| • Jan             | March              | Sun nearest Corpus Christi                         |
| • Sept            |                    | June   |
| • Jan             | Easter             | Early July   |
| • Oct             | Advent             | 3 <sup>rd</sup> /5 <sup>th</sup> Sundays of Easter |
| • Jan             | Lent               | June   |
| • Nov             | Holy Week          | Early May  |
| • ?               | From Easter        | June/July  |
| • After Christmas | April              | May  |
| • Advent          | Lent               | Paschaltide  |
| • Nov             | May                | May  |
| • Jan             | Lent               | May  |
| • Oct             | May/June           | May/June   |
| • Nov             | May                | End of June  |
| • Sept            | May/June           | June   |
| • Feb/March       | Mid April          | June   |
| • Jan             | May                | May  |
| • Sept            |                    |  |
| • Advent          | Lent               | End of June  |
| • Jan             | Mid March          | May  |

**14. How are the preparation sessions organised? (how often/where/with whom/what is the format)**

- Take children after school (in school) one day each week and on Sat before evening Mass (Parish hall). Sessions involve discussion & worksheets with take home sheets for parents to use with children.
- Usually every second week alternating between school/parish based sessions. For some sessions parents go with one catechist and children with another.
- Weekly, parish meeting room. Catechist & PP plus parents who are willing to stay and help.
- In school with teachers, one session per week. In parish one session per week

- Every 2 weeks in Church building. 2 catechists work with children, catechist & PP work with parents. Sessions begin with prayer all together & end with refreshments.
- At mass in the presbytery on Sundays. At school in formal classes. Weekly plus home sessions.
- Weekly in school with separate arrangements for children not attending Catholic schools.
- Catechists meet prior to first meeting to plan a few sessions. One catechist spends 10 mins on an activity with children while other talks to parents at beginning of each session. Parents attend every session. Sessions held weekly in the social room. After the initial talk to parents the group gathers together and the rest of the session continues - approx 45 mins.
- Done by class teacher
- One session (30 mins) each week from Jan-June, in one of the parish rooms, with 2 catechists (and parents if they wish), to follow the programme with homework for parents & child.
- Held in church, Fri pm, 3.30 - 5pm, with catechist & PP
- 12 sessions, in church after Sunday Mass
- Weekly in school with 2 teachers
- After 9am Mass every Sunday during term time
- Sessions are very Thursday night during school term in the presbytery
- Tues from Jan to FHC, in the parish hall. 3 catechists on a 3 weekly rota. Talk/role play/discussion/book work.
- School- weekly; church - 8 sessions, 2 for FR, 6 for FE
- 6 lessons on Sun for FR/6 for FE. Held, in presbytery, during 10am Mass with catechists, term time. Catechists work in conjunction with school teacher.
- Lady Chapel in church. 5 sessions in prep for FR, 6 sessions in prep for FE, 1 session after FE.
- 5 sessions in prep for FR, 6 sessions in prep for FE, 1 session after FE.
- Gold Book Chapters: School does story/parish catechists do reflection/home does the rest.
- Approx monthly in the parish centre with the catechists having divided the children into groups
- In church annexe: 2/3 Sunday evenings for one hour
- 10 sessions: Parish hall & Church; with PP, catechist & deacon
- Every 2 weeks
- Children: 6-8 sessions at school; Parents: 2 sessions. Small group from chapel of ease meet in a child's home
- RE classes in Y3 in school as well as Sat am in Parish hall, 10.30-11.30
- Sessions are held about every 2 weeks, at the school, after school has ended. Talks for parents take place some at school some at church.
- Process is ongoing - all through the year
- On Sun after Mass, weekly excluding hols. In the parish room with catechist, parents & children

- There are occasional meetings to take stock of what has been learnt, but the best preparation is regular Sun Mass attendance which I insist on.
- Each Sunday
- Seven; in school; catechists with groups

**15. During the preparation period are there any celebrations for the children during the Sunday Eucharist? If so how many?**

- Three
- Four - 2
- Always the presentation at the beginning.
- Each month
- Children are presented to the parish during the advent mass which involves the whole school attending Sunday mass.
- Dec - Presentation Mass, March - Children take special part in the Penitential Rite of the Mass, June - Mass of Thanksgiving
- Presentation service
- 3 at present, intend to increase.
- Late Jan before Reconciliation, which includes enrolment of the children for FS. A Mass in May during which children are anointed. Children involved in the Palm Sunday liturgy.
- One only - children are introduced to parish early in programme and presented with books. They do not do any readings but take part in the Mass as normal. Parents make their promise.
- Enrolment Mass-early on in preparation. Mass of preparation on Sun before FHC Day
- Children have their own liturgy of the word, going out before the readings, coming back at the offertory. This celebration is separate to the normal CLOW and goes on throughout the preparation
- Yes - 2/3
- 2 - One for enrolment and one in the middle of the programme. Children are encouraged to come to Mass
- Rite of Enrolment (with parents). Children are blessed and formally dismissed at Sunday Mass
- Presentation Mass to parish family. Family Masses once a month all year.
- 1 - Enrolment in early Advent. 5 - Suns of Lent: prayer for children
- 5 celebrations plus FHC
- Some years
- None
- Several special Masses in church each school term. After FS 3 celebrations are led by the candidates
- CLOW
- A Sunday celebration where the children are presented to parishioners & ask for prayers. There are 3 celebrations per term when all children play a special part.

- All children preparing for FHC are expected to join the Communion queue each Sun to receive a blessing. This has proved to be a successful practical exercise. There is one celebration on a Sun in Nov highlighting F. Communicants.
- Yes whatever are prescribed by the Brusselman's course
- Yes occasionally. It's difficult to have them all at the same mass
- Not this year but hopefully will begin to do so next year
- The numbers receiving these sacraments here (few) do not favour this.
- Children's mass each month
- 10 Masses (programme enclosed)
- Presentation of candidates at the beginning and Sun prior to FHC. CLOW also. Mass of thanksgiving on Sun following FHC

**16. What preparation takes place for Reconciliation and how is this sacrament celebrated?**

- Gift of Forgiveness in GGG/Own 'Hug of Heaven' practice with explanation & discussion for parents/Sacrament celebrated on a Sat am, parents present & support child, catechists introduce and support. Usually 2 priests.
- Preparation during pre-Lent & Lenten period. Celebrated together as a group plus individual confession.
- Book with catechists. Short ceremony of readings & individual confession. Refreshments after in school hall.
- Children have a simple penitential service prior to receiving the Eucharist.
- This year we celebrated FR during our Holy Week Reconciliation Service for the parish. My book about forgiveness is used for preparation.
- As part of the fortnightly meetings. A special Sat am liturgy for families of candidates.
- Part of the whole programme. Parents & children in a service. Choice of open or closed. Twice before communion.
- Reconciliation takes place in school and parents are encouraged to present their children for the sacrament again before FC, preferably during Lent.
- 2 weeks spent on Reconciliation. In the third week children make FR in church sitting on the altar talking to the priest. Small party afterwards.
- Preparation done in school. The book used involves the parents as well as children. Sacrament celebrated in form of a penitential service with individual confessions. Parents have opportunity for Confession too.
- Preparation largely done in school. Celebrated with parents in church one evening before FHC Day.
- Making Things Right - 5 sessions. Penitential Service for families, with individual confession and party in hall. Presented with certificate during Sun Eucharist.
- Making Things Right. Hymns, readings, prayers, individual confession, blessing
- Making Things Right. The children come when they want to with their parents
- Celebrated at a specially designed penitential service with both priests.

- Preparation - as per course. Sacrament celebrated as a liturgy on Sat am in Church.
- PP and catechists take a lesson on Sacrament & visit to confessional with PP. On the day, 2 priests, candidates & families attend confession. Small celebration in parish hall.
- 2 sessions - family involvement, parents are catechised, then assist on the day of the FR
- PP attends school every week; speaks about confession; has 'dry-runs' with children; takes them to church to see the confessional and to prepare for sacrament. Confession during school time: once in confessional, once face-to-face.
- 'I Belong' - 5 sessions. Children celebrate in context of a parish Reconciliation Service in Advent and again in Lent.
- 'I Belong' - 5 sessions. Celebrated on the sanctuary; parents invited to bring the children and celebrate the sacrament too.
- Part of programme & talk from PP
- Celebrated when the catechists and parents think the child is ready. Sometimes at a penance service for the children. Latterly the children have been brought at the regular confession times in the parish.
- A parental meeting. A joint penance service with individual confession in the open kneeling before the tabernacle.
- 1 parents' meeting; 2 sessions with children & parents. Celebration according to Rite 2 is first experience. Rite 1 is offered prior to FHC
- Celebration on a Sun afternoon in Lent
- One to one with priest in Confession Room
- Preparation in school. Children come to church with families over 2 consecutive evenings, about 15 families per evening.
- Catechists & myself talk about Confession
- Part of FHC preparation. Celebrated on a Sat pm with families
- Covered in the PP's worksheets with an examination of conscience appropriate to the age in advance of FR. Celebrated in normal confession time.
- Twice before FHC - Penitential service & open confession and a second time in the confessional.
- One session; parents encouraged to prepare children. Reconciliation service Sat am with open confession. Parents and others encouraged to join in.
- Concepts of sin & reconciliation are part of programme. Special service of Reconciliation at which children make first confession supported by parents. Catechists help with thanksgiving & penance afterwards.

### **The children: What age and support?**

#### **17. At what age do the children make their First Sacraments?**

- Year 3 - 3
- 8 years - 11
- 8 years plus - 6

- 7-9 - 1
- 8 years or Y3 in school - 9
- 7/8 - 3
- 7+
- Y3 or above - 2
- Y3 at school and any others not in our school
- Y4 (7-8)
- 7 - 3
- 8/Y4

**18. How do you support any children with special needs?**

- Individualised as necessary. Usually enough catechists to allow close support.
- As required - depends on the child.
- Own special book
- This has not yet arisen but any help required would be given
- The catechist or a parent will help a child with special needs.
- As & when
- Special catechist. Advice from school
- By using learning support when preparing in school, during the liturgies and at the celebrations. Close liaison with parents.
- School teacher does it
- Catechist is a teacher in a special needs school.
- As much support as needed without making them feel totally different.
- As with any children with special needs in the school
- Mentors and advisors in parish
- Yes - though this is rather challenging for one catechist!
- Children are treated the same with extra support as & where necessary.
- Involve the parents
- Individual tuition
- We have a special edition of 'I Belong' and, if necessary, an extra catechist.
- 'I Belong' produces a special book. We adapt the programme to suit those with special needs. All children taught a hymn in sign language which is sung & signed at FE Mass.
- As appropriate
- None so far
- Special attention from retired RE co-ordinator who is a parishioner
- By giving extra time
- With difficulty
- Some have a personal non-teaching helper. Generally speaking we try not to make them feel different to the majority.
- There is a parish based catechist who deals with 1/2 children each year who fall outside the general run of things
- Do all we can

- We have the relevant resources, they are allowed to go at their own pace and can celebrate the sacraments when they feel ready
- As necessary but this is only an occasional happening
- One to one help
- Dealt with individually as and when need arises.

## Home/School/Parish Links

### 19. In what way is the Parish Community involved in the process? (e.g. prayer sponsors)

- Prayer sponsors used but complex & time-consuming to organise.
- Prayer sponsors are invited after the presentation and usually successfully
- Names but no photos in church
- Children choose prayer sponsors. School choir takes part in service. Parents/siblings participate in service eg readings, offertory.
- FC is celebrated at Sunday morning Mass. The entire congregation is invited to stay behind for a celebration.
- Prayer sponsors - 5
- Prayer sponsors. Public liturgy
- Prayer sponsors. Full involvement & participation in the children's masses. FC Sunday is a special parish event with party organised by parents & church helpers.
- Prayer sponsors. A board in the social room displays the work the children. Their photos are displayed at the front of church to remind the parish about these children.
- Photographs of children displayed and parishioners pray for individual children - prayer sponsors
- Prayer sponsors, parish prayers. A toleration of 27 new faces (+ parents) coming to Mass for 6 months and then not seeing them again.
- Children presented in Mass of Enrolment, introduced to parish. Display of photos. Prayer sponsors.
- Children enrolled at Sun Mass, photos are displayed in church
- Prayer sponsors. Sunday Mass. Photos up in church. Regular intercessions at Mass. Parish prayer groups. Parish hosts Parish Feast at which children are guests of honour.
- Parish community asked to pray for children each Sunday.
- Parish celebrations for both sacraments. FHC always within Sun Mass (3<sup>rd</sup>/5<sup>th</sup> Sun Easter)
- Picture displays related to I Belong decorate the Church; photos of the children displayed, prayer sponsors via the Mass of Enrolment.
- Prayer sponsors; involvement of children in Mass when sessions are taking place.
- Bidding prayers at Sunday mass.
- Prayer sponsors; Celebration of FHC takes place over 4-6 weeks normal Sunday Masses

- Each child is supported by prayer
- Mainly through Sun Eucharist. We work hard to encourage families to celebrate with us. We celebrate whole school masses & class masses. Many parents & family members join us.
- Prayer sponsors; CLOW on Sun; the prayers of the community who are reminded by the photos of the candidates on church noticeboard.
- Parish celebrations during the preparation course. We have had prayer sponsors but currently do not have any - we had difficulty getting them.
- People know who the candidates are & pray for them
- Monthly children's mass
- Photos on wall (names separate); bidding prayers; prayer sponsors for some
- Parishioners attend school masses so children can witness how people participate who are committed to daily mass. Each child has prayer sponsor. Parish prays for children during preparation time. Parishioners help with party after mass on Sun after FHC

**20. In what way is the school/s involved in the process?**

- Distributing letters but 1/3 of children do not attend Catholic primaries
- General support throughout
- Guiding parents
- Some classes take place in school. First communicants lead a school assembly.
- Some of the children attend the local primary school but are prepared in the parish. This year almost 50% of the class attends a non-Catholic school.
- School involved and helpful
- RE Programme
- One third of programme in school.
- Full involvement at all stages of the process.
- They do all the work
- Reconciliation preparation
- Welcoming/introduction assemblies, display of photos, prayer sponsors, Corpus Christi Mass to welcome them.
- Prayerful & practical
- Completely
- General support where necessary
- School helped to co-ordinate those applying.
- At moment the class teacher for Y3 is not a Catholic (?). However the school is supportive and there is a very good caring atmosphere. The HIA RE is far too vague with little reference to the Church or a sense of commitment.
- One period per day the class teacher prepares the children for both sacraments
- No primary school
- School supports the I Belong programme by linking its themes to class RE work where it can.
- Very much involved: Gold Book-story part of each chapter; chs 5 & 9

- I assume they prepare adequately although looking at some syllabuses I have some misgivings: little mention of Sunday mass, Papacy and specifically Catholic things. It's time catechetics was overhauled and wishy-washy liberal approach dropped. Their syllabus could be endorsed by people of any faith or none.
- Supportive: communications, rehearsals, 'back-up' teaching
- Plays a part in preparation
- Primary school directly involved
- No parish school - 3
- On going RE in school. Support for sessions using school building. Encouraging the children & speaking about it.
- School takes into account that most of class are involved in parish programme. PP celebrates mass in school hall instead of in church most Fridays during term time for one of top three classes. Teachers come along on the day itself.

## 21. What preparation, help and support is given to parents?

- Detailed introductory evening session before children start with PP in attendance. Close informal links between catechists and parents at sessions. Parents have catechists' phone numbers. Child protection & emergency procedures followed. Brief meeting led by PP pre-FR. Detailed meeting pre-FE.
- PP meets with parents at least 3 times prior to each sacrament. Work for parents at home with children.
- For some sessions parents go with one catechist and children with another.
- Ongoing catechesis of parents is an area we need to look at seriously.
- Special meetings for parents in Nov, Jan, March & April
- Parent's meetings in school & parish. One third of programme done at home by parents & children.
- Meetings held with Mrs Pennington plus other meetings with catechists and teachers. PP addresses meetings & gives guidance as required.
- Parents attend every week and are encouraged to help the children during the week to go over topics covered. Parents encouraged to contribute in terms of what hymns etc for FHC and to take part by doing readings on the day.
- Again through the school. PP involved with a few meetings with the parents.
- 2-3 sessions plus a session on the practicalities of the day - all of which the parents organise.
- Meetings, letters, informal discussions before & after sessions, open invitation to contact PP/catechists at any time, prayer sheets.
- Some talks
- They go over what is done in school, at home and meet 3 times during the programme
- Regular parents' sessions at various stages. Advice offered by catechists after each session. Parents are *expected* to attend confession (where possible) with children.
- 2 sessions with the PP

- 2 meetings one at beginning and one towards the end. Parents are seen at the end of each meeting when & if necessary and catechists are available to be seen too.
- Talks/discussions with PP & catechists.
- 2 meetings with parents. If parents fail to attend it is taken as a sign that they do not wish their child to receive sacraments. They are warned of this and told that they will have a further opportunity the following year.
- Leading catechist & PP work with parents at each session.
- Parents are invited to be a part of the entire process: catechists; supervise homework; lead by example ie attend Church & participate in Sac of Reconciliation; PP meet with parents
- Talk & encouragement throughout programme
- Provision of notes for parents; notes for work at home with children; opportunity for adult questions at each session. Parents & children participate in sessions together.
- As much as possible
- Through meetings for parents & home visits from PP
- 3 Sessions: One on being a catholic; One on confession & moral issues from a parent's point of view; One on the mass from a parent's point of view.
- PP visits homes of all preparing for FHC
- The catechist keeps all parents informed on what is taking place and helps them to help their children in the preparation programme
- Parents learn from the worksheets nearly as much as the children-indeed they double as remedial catechesis for them. They seem to find it very rewarding to go through the sheets personally with their children: often an entirely new experience for them.
- Parents involved in preparation
- Opportunity to ask questions & to seek extra support if needed.
- Parents invited to attend school masses. Parents get literature and are encouraged to help children fill in exercise books. They get talks from the catechists at the beginning of the process & from PP as they wait for children during sessions, which take place after the 10 am mass.

## **22. What further support for parents is needed?**

- Flyer from Diocese (via CLOW) stressing the importance of active parental interest in child's FS. To be given out late spring/early summer pre-Y3
- We need to offer as much as possible to a generation totally unaware of these sacraments; to parents, usually non-catholic, who show great support but fail to have the background. Very difficult area is the subject of 2<sup>nd</sup>/3<sup>rd</sup> marriage situations.
- An opportunity for them to examine their faith commitment
- Many do not practice at all. Most would benefit from an adapted RCIA course but would they be willing?
- Possibly a bit more involvement with sessions held at school

- Ask the parents
- Feel more could be done, but many parents are in irregular unions, many work shifts, many seem to find bringing children to church inconvenient on Sundays which makes initiation difficult not just to organise but to get them engaged. Many children/parents will not come to church afterwards.
- Pre-communion preparation classes - 1-2 maybe
- Sound teaching in Catholic schools. More stringent challenge for own faith journey.
- Vast majority are inactive Catholics and have little understanding of the sacraments. It's a big problem!
- Don't know - cannot get blood from a stone!
- Some parents need a little extra support. Grandparents help where a parent is not a Catholic.
- Greater awareness of issues in Church locally ie do not appreciate future shortage of clergy and need for them to be proactive parishioners and not just Catholic because they/children are baptised.
- None that I can think of - all people involved in programme are very approachable.
- Perhaps a fuller programme? The main support is a nourishing Sun Eucharist.
- Nothing more can be asked of parents who clearly have many demanding commitments
- Not aware of any - but main problem is mass attendance
- Most of our parents need basic evangelisation. They do not know their faith & have no personal relationship with Christ.
- Instruction continues with monthly meetings and worksheets given to parents & children
- In a world of competing priorities it is the faith of the parents which will decide how highly they value their faith and how ready they are to pass it on
- Encouragement to keep up the practice of the faith, so that FC is not the last.

### **23. Is there any follow-up to First Sacraments preparation and celebration?**

- Parish celebration - but too few came. This year's parents - next year's prayer sponsors, worked for a while but hard to sustain.
- General invitation to celebration of feasts throughout the year. Inclusion in the following year's celebrations to underline continuity.
- Only in school
- Trust they will be at Mass every Sunday
- Yes - 2
- No - 3
- Yes but few attend
- FS children involved fully in subsequent masses and liturgies eg SS Peter & Paul feast day provides another occasion for the children to be presented to the school and parish community.

- After the children have made FHC we meet again to reflect on the day and plan a Going Forth Mass.
- On the Sunday after FHC Day there is a Sun Celebration Mass which children & families attend.
- After FHC there are a couple of sessions with the children. Some of the children will go on to be altar servers.
- All children return for parish celebrations, photos, certificates, party. School Mass.
- Parish Feast, school celebrations, Corpus Christi processions, anniversary cards.
- Many of the boys and girls train as altar servers.
- Mass of thanksgiving and a memento of the occasion presented eg crucifix.
- One session after FHC. Encouragement to children to become altar servers (many do)
- After FHC children are invited to receive their certificates during a 'sending forth' Mass.
- Occasional confessions in primary school; assist in secondary school when asked.
- Regular child-oriented Sunday Masses. Provision of CLOW at all masses
- FE is a family celebration on a chosen weekend in May; a whole group celebration is on the Sun before Corpus Christi and in school for the feast day. Part of the school RE Programme also.
- School class masses where the detail of each part of the mass is explained as we go along
- After FHC most of the families disappear
- We are hoping to do a follow-up
- Catechetical classes (Sunday school)
- Sending forth mass & party in school
- PP hopes to keep regular contact with families. School masses.

#### **24. Any further comments?**

- Many parents have little connection with mass/holy communion and see FS as a school thing in Y3. Some teachers are nearly in the same situation as they are not necessarily RC/practising RC
- Perhaps a structured short programme for parents about these sacraments.
- Seriously thinking about putting together own course to suit parish needs.
- Although the children are very well prepared there could possibly be more involvement of parents in the actual preparation. However the participation in the three special Masses leading up to FHC is wonderful and a great time of involvement & celebration for parents, children & parishioners.
- We have 2 churches in our parish. The children make FHC in whichever building they usually attend. They come together in the main church to celebrate the Going Forth mass and afterwards celebrate with a Communion breakfast.
- In a smaller parish it is difficult to find catechists who have the time and ability to lead children through their preparation for FHC. This is also the case for

baptism/marriage/RCIA. Without the catechists the programme would have to be much shorter and less consistent. They are very committed and rejoice when one or two of the parents will continue to bring children after FHC

- Its early days for us. Would prefer for the preparation to go back into school but teaching in the school is undergoing a lot of personal changes.
- Lapsation is a major obstacle; Sunday/weekends seem to be for family events outside the church. Divided families are a source of concern.
- We could do with a longer follow-up programme - maybe a couple of sessions a few months later.
- Prayers suitable for children esp as 'Thanksgiving after Holy Communion'
- The *Gold Book* has & continues to have worked well.
- A deanery catechist to support all neighbouring parishes would be a help - such a person to have requisite training.
- We are organising a Deanery meeting to move further with the home/school/parish ideas
- As children will remember what you do long after they have forgotten what you said, the practical example of parents & catechists is paramount. That is why we regard the presence of the children at Mass for a blessing each Sun with their parents as the primary preparation. The content of the text book used also gets a lot of thought. The methods & style employed by the catechists is a minor consideration provided they themselves have a deep faith, reverence for & understanding of the sacraments. That will invariably rub off to the children. There is no substitute for the silent sermon of good example.
- Small parish only 4/5 children for FS. It is done professionally but informally.
- FS for some will probably also be their last! Not all who receive communion go on to Confirmation. Process still seen as a social event by some.
- There's no such thing as a perfect parish or perfect FC preparation. We can only sow the seeds of the Gospel and pray they will bear fruit.