

GROWING TOGETHER

Parents and teachers working together

A NEW SCHOOL
IS A NEW START
FOR THE WHOLE
FAMILY



'Young people need to know
that they are loved. '



INTRODUCTION



STARTING A NEW SCHOOL IS AN OPPORTUNITY TO MAKE A NEW START.

When a young person starts at a Catholic school they are joining a family that will care for them but also expect them to keep some basic rules . The new pupils will be expected to work together and with their teachers. Our school wants to help your child grow up well, and enjoy a family atmosphere as they work hard academically. We want to join in partnership with you as parents so that we can work together. This booklet says something about the school's vision of care and the spirituality that inspires us. It is an approach that could help to refresh your family life as well.

LET THEM KNOW THEY ARE LOVED!

THE CATHOLIC TRADITION OF EDUCATION INVOLVES THE WHOLE PERSON. A HAPPY PERSON WILL LEARN BETTER THAN A STRESSED PERSON. OUR SCHOOL WILL TRY TO CREATE AN ATMOSPHERE OF LOVING KINDNESS

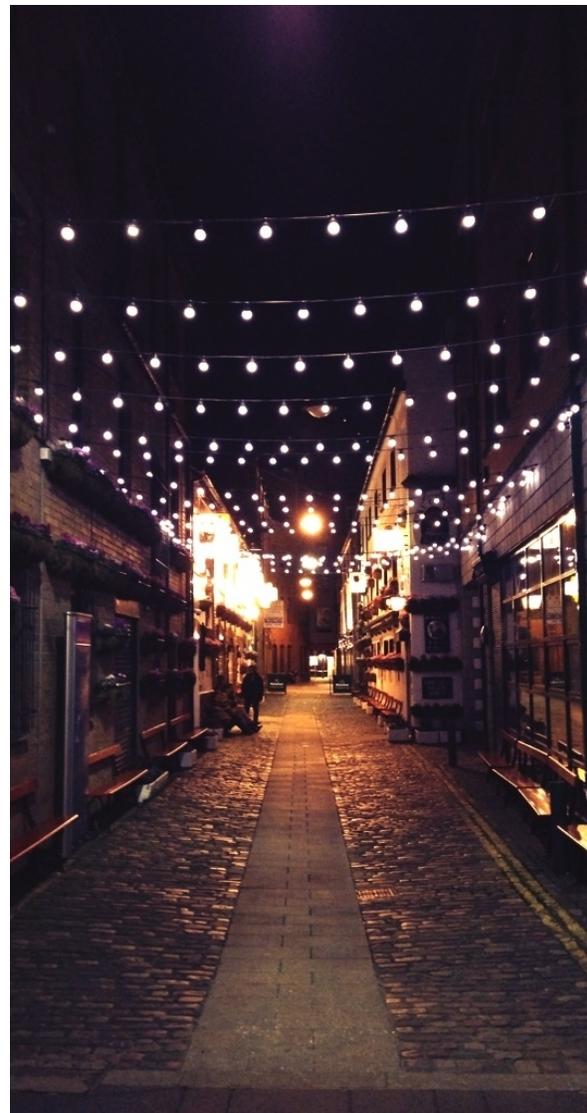
Maintaining a positive atmosphere between people is not easy. There are always times when people disagree, speak harshly to one another or misunderstand one another's intentions. That is all normal. In fact it is helpful for adults and young people growing to maturity to disagree.

The disagreements only become a problem when the people involved start to doubt that they are loved. The arguments are never really sorted out until there is confidence again in that care and kindness. bet

This small booklet is an invitation to continue to believe in the goodness of all the people you live with at home and the goodness of those with whom you work at school.

Of course you can't do that caring for long unless you are also learning to care for your self. So as an adult working with young people you too need to know that you are loved.

This booklet might help you to create the atmosphere within which everyone will know that they are loved



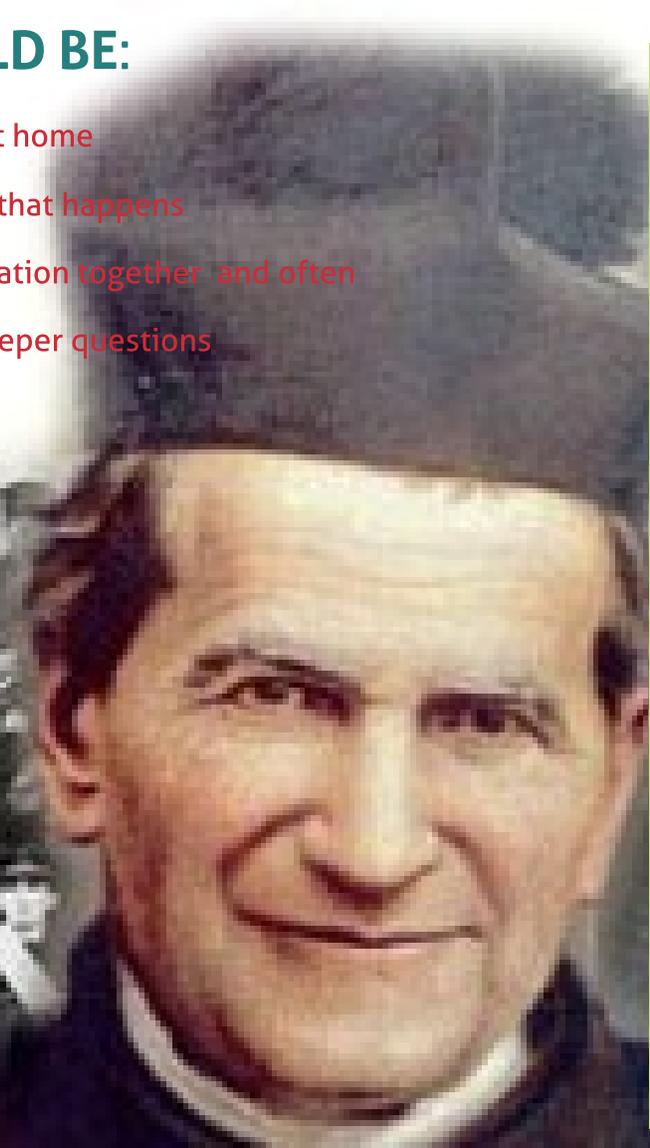
EVERY FAMILY SHOULD BE:

A Home: Make sure people feel at home

A School: Catch the learning in all that happens

A Playground: Have fun and relaxation together and often

A Church: Stop and think about deeper questions



Don Bosco is one of the leading lights in the Catholic Church about working with young people. He grew up in a single parent home with a step brother and a lot of tension. Watching how his mother managed the family inspired his approach to street children and orphans.

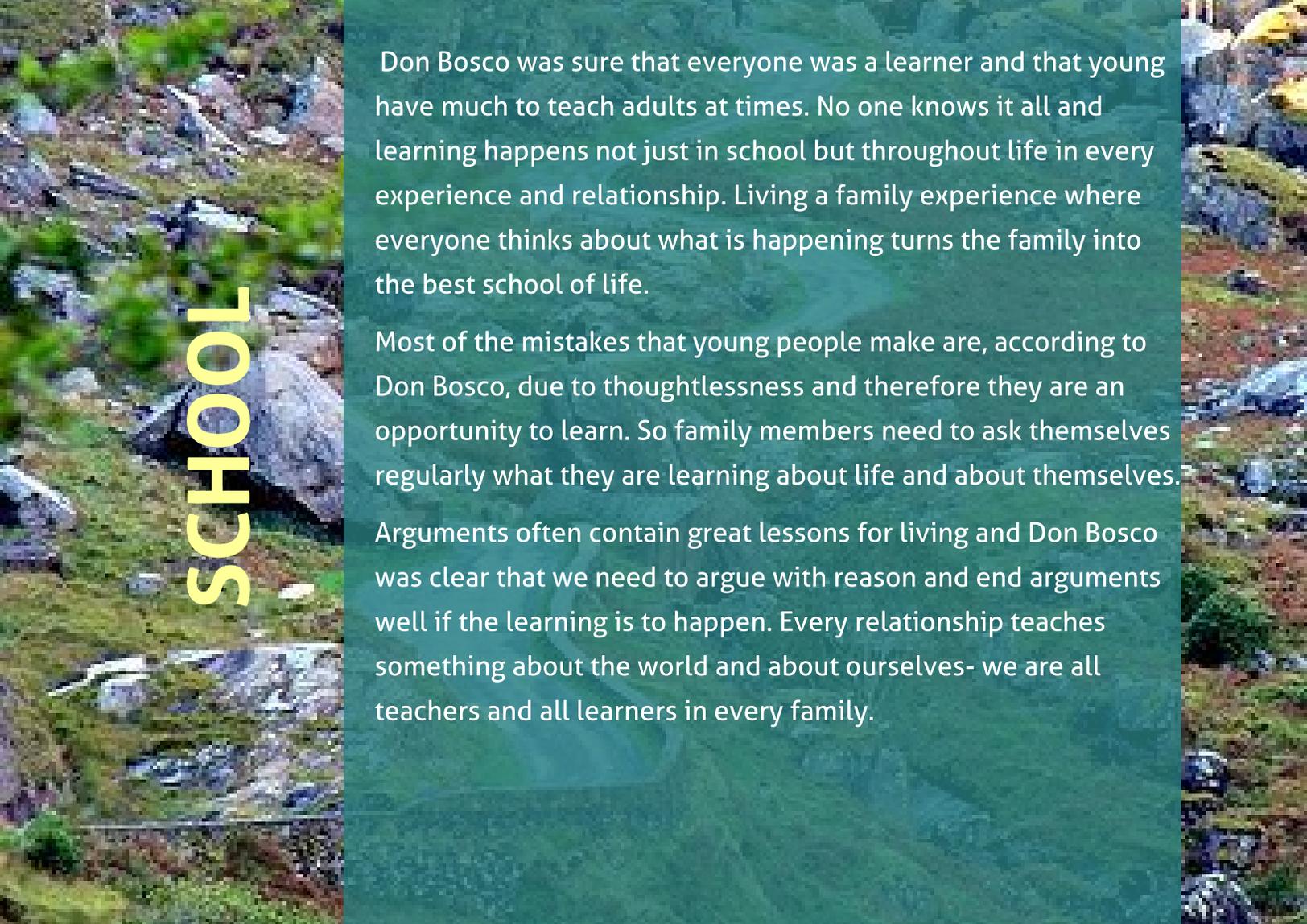
His way of working grew out of a family experience and made his schools happy, healthy and successful environments





Don Bosco knew that young people needed a strong sense of emotional safety if they were to grow in a balanced way. He had experienced anger and bullying at home and knew how it might damage relationships. His approach put kindness at the centre of family life and maintained it by shared celebration, one to one emotional honesty, spiritual values and clear rules. The family does not need to be perfect and every family will need to share forgiveness regularly.

The family does need to work so that each person, adult and young, really knows that they are loved. That love can be tender and tough but each person needs to know that the other person has their best interests at heart. One of the ways to build a sense of belonging is through regular praise and encouragement. With adolescents this is often done best by a one to one where appreciation, praise and thanks can be received face to face. Without regular praise the necessary criticism shared in family life will be difficult to hear.



SCHOOLS

Don Bosco was sure that everyone was a learner and that young have much to teach adults at times. No one knows it all and learning happens not just in school but throughout life in every experience and relationship. Living a family experience where everyone thinks about what is happening turns the family into the best school of life.

Most of the mistakes that young people make are, according to Don Bosco, due to thoughtlessness and therefore they are an opportunity to learn. So family members need to ask themselves regularly what they are learning about life and about themselves.

Arguments often contain great lessons for living and Don Bosco was clear that we need to argue with reason and end arguments well if the learning is to happen. Every relationship teaches something about the world and about ourselves- we are all teachers and all learners in every family.

PLAYGROUND

Don Bosco began his work by helping people to play together. He was keen that adults had fun together with young people and learnt to relax with them. Being present, aware of how young people are, seeing their personalities develop, was a key part of building confidence and a family spirit.

Play also eases the tension of work, exams and worries about the future. Play is about being in the present moment and enjoying life. For Don Bosco it was also the place where people can express their spirit, their soul, their joy in being alive. Therefore there should be time for noise and fun as well as some quieter times in family life. Parents and children should all have some individual time for play whether it is in sport or hobbies or going out. For Don Bosco such play was sacred.

Where possible families also need to relax and celebrate together. Shared meals and fun led sometimes by younger family members can help parents to relax and enjoy being together.



CHURCH

The Salesian approach to young people has a great trust in the ability of people to be spiritual, to sense mystery, and explore the meaning of life at all ages. In an age where the pace of life keeps families moving from one event to another Don Bosco wanted to create some peaceful spaces. There young people and adults could touch the deeper questions of life and meaning.

So, for Salesians every family is a kind of church, a place to celebrate life and be touched by a deeper spirit that moves in all people. To do this he opened up the Gospel as a way of living: love your neighbour, do not be afraid, forgive one another, I am with you always etc.

The family becomes a church especially when reflection on the spirit at work in people leads to stillness, forgiveness and celebration. There are times when we can be overwhelmed by the goodness of those we live with because parents and children can all be saints for at least some of the time in family life.

PARTNERS IN EDUCATION

HOME. SCHOOL PLAYGROUND AND CHURCH ARE FOUR KEY WORDS THAT CAN JOIN THE WORLDS OF FAMILY AND SCHOOL INTO ONE HEALTHY EXPERIENCE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE.

School will try to build these four aspects of spirituality into their work with young people. In doing so they will be reinforcing the values of your family life.

The work of teachers in the classroom and the way that pastoral staff deal with problems will help parents to work consistently with their young people. The use of praise

and rewards in school will reinforce praise and encouragement at home and the use of prayer and reflection at school should encourage the spiritual life of the family at home.

This partnership, built on a deep concern for the young, is part of a common vocation shared by teachers and parents.

KEEP THE GROUND RULES FEW AND CLEAR- REMIND YOUNG PEOPLE OF THOSE RULES OFTEN

A SAINT'S ADVICE

1. Let young people run about and make noise as long as they are not doing harm. Better a noisy house than an angry silence.
2. Share free time with each other, play together because that puts everyone at the same level and eases worries, builds confidence and helps everyone to relax.
3. Avoid corporal punishment and isolation of young people. Make reprimands calmly and keep punishments proportional to the issue as it is understood by the young person.Body text
4. Use a quiet moment in the evening to settle people's minds and end the day positively. Don Bosco's mother Margaret taught him to do this with even the most troublesome lads. He called it a "goodnight" and it is described at the end of this booklet.
5. Always have something on the horizon to look forward to- Don Bosco used concerts, trips out and celebrations to break up the routine of his work with young people.
6. Keep yourself cheerful and find something to praise in each member of the family. ■

Use a quiet moment in the evening to settle people's minds and end the day positively

A SAINT'S ADVICE

7. Make the first move- don't wait for things to get out of hand. Instead guide and distract young people to more balanced choices about how they should behave.
8. Have a regular "word in the ear" especially to give praise and to let people know that they are loved.
9. Make the rules few and clear. In the Gospel it says- "Let your yes be yes and your no be no" stick to your promises and don't make threats you can't follow through.
10. Use reason when correcting others because we are all reasoning beings. Avoid saying "because I said so" but be clear about your reasoning even if the other does not agree with it.
11. Don't deal with an argument until you have calmed down. If possible delay the discussion until you are calm enough to reason and to listen to the other person without an audience.
12. After an argument try to leave the other person on friendly terms and then forget the issue and do not return to it again.

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NOT AN EASY WAY BUT IT WORKS

THE SALESIAN APPROACH WORKS WELL WITH YOUNG PEOPLE BUT IT DEMANDS PATIENCE AND CONSISTENCY FROM PARENTS AND TEACHERS

Don Bosco admitted that his advice was hard to follow for the adults but made it easy for young people to grow up with good boundaries and positive relationships. Following this advice takes every parent into a spiritual journey and perhaps deal with some of the difficulties and weaknesses that most adults carry. This is not an easy road but does lead to life, to growth and to deeper

relationships. It also opens up the mystery and meaning of life and seems to create an inner strength that comes out as resilience in young people. It is a tough way to work but one that is shared by the family and by the Salesian school.

If you want to know more about this approach to working with young people please contact the school for more resources.



FINDING YOUR SPIRIT AS A FAMILY

EVERY FAMILY HAS A SPIRITUAL DIMENSION BECAUSE OF THE WAY PEOPLE LIVE AND WORK TOGETHER.

The word for spirit in Hebrew and in Arabic comes from the word ruah which means breath. It describes the deep sense of life that moves in every person as they breathe in and out. In Christian tradition it is the soul of a person; that place in each life that is linked to God. When Don Bosco spoke of a family spirit he wanted to emphasise

that in relating to each member of our family we are somehow in touch with the mystery that many call God. If you take the letters of the word ruah you can find a sort of formula for building up the spirit of a family



RESPECT AND UNDERSTANDING

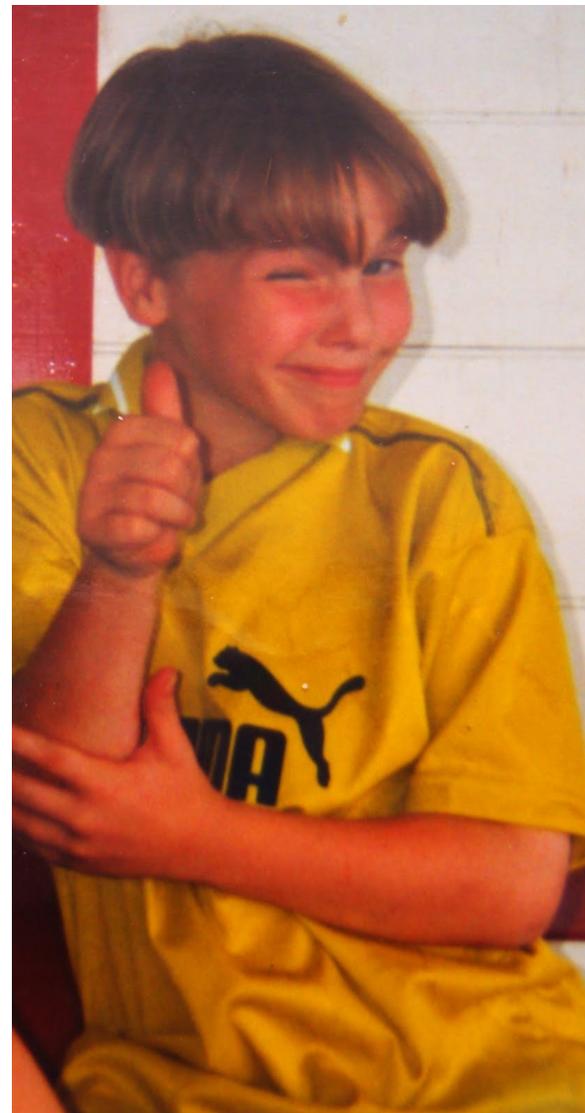
RESPECT AND UNDERSTANDING ARE THOUGHTFUL ASPECTS OF KEEPING THE FAMILY SPIRIT HEALTHY

Respect-

Recognising the sacred mystery of life in each member of the family. That means living alongside them in a way that does not damage their spirit but helps them to grow. It also means respecting your own dignity and not allowing yourself to be used or exploited in a way that breaks your own spirit.

Understanding-

Using reason and consistency to deal with yourself and others. Reflecting on how others are behaving and what might be the reason for their behaviour. Listening to what others say and what they do not say. Seeking guidance and advice when things are not clear. Recognising the effort of others

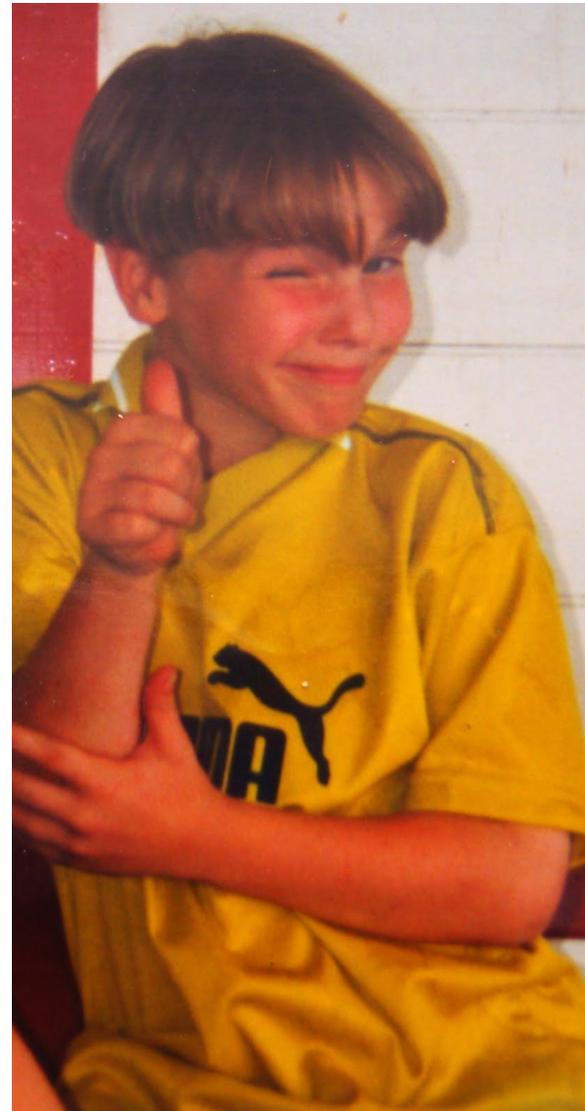


AFFECTION AND HUMOUR

**EMPHASISING THE GOOD THAT PEOPLE DO, BEING OPTIMISTIC AND CHEERFUL.
SHARING DISAPPOINTMENTS AND FORGIVENESS IN SAFE CONVERSATIONS**

Affection- Making sure that everyone in the family knows that you do love them. Allowing others to know that you are hurt and disappointed with them. Being able to give praise and celebrate success and milestones on others journeys. Being able to drip feed care and warmth into the lives of others.

Humour- Being aware that everyone makes mistakes and laughter can release tensions and dissolve a heavy heartedness that dulls the spirit. Being cheerful and resilient through the struggles of life by focussing on what is good rather than being taken over by worries and problems.





A Salesian Creed

**We believe that God loves life
And has created people to explore that mystery**

**We believe that God is already present
Sharing life with us in every moment.**

**We believe that God's spirit moves us
When we reach out in genuine love to others**

**We recognize that God is with us in relationship
Challenging us to self sacrificing love.**

**We believe that no one should be excluded
Or written off or taken for granted
Because they all share the mystery of God's life.**

**We believe that whatever happens to us
That God can weave the events of our lives
Into an eternal pattern of meaning.**

**Therefore we look to the future with confidence
Because we believe that God is with us
Here and now and until the end of time.**