



Scoil Mhuire agus Íde

**Bóthar Buí,
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Co. Limerick.**

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Religious Education Policy

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THE SCOPE OF THE POLICY

As a Catholic school the Religious Education Policy impacts on the whole school community.

Support for the implementation of the Policy comes from;

- **Board of Management:** Approves the policy, ensures its implementation and monitors its review.
- **Principal and Deputy Principal:** Support the procedures of the policy and ensure its effective implementation.
- **School Staff:** Embraces and safeguards the Ethos of the school and supports the cross cultural nature of Religious Education.
- **Teachers of Religious Education:** Implement and review the policy. To ensure a high standard and effective delivery of Religious Education.
- **Pastoral Care Personnel:** (Pastoral Care Team/Class Tutors/Year Heads/ Guidance Counsellors) Monitor the effects of the policy and to provide support and guidance to students.
- **Parent(s) / Guardian(s):** Support the Ethos of the school, the Religious Education programme and facilitate the faith formation of their children.
- **Students:** Participate in the Religious Education programme and related activities and to cultivate openness to other religious traditions.

MISSION STATEMENT

The Religious Education Policy is governed by our school ethos and is guided by our school's Mission Statement. This states that our aim and purpose in Scoil Mhuire agus Íde is to help our students to take their place in society as educated, mature and committed Christians. We want our school to be not only a centre of academic excellence but also a caring community where personal faith is nurtured and developed.

In Scoil Mhuire agus Íde we aim:

- To create a caring environment in which everyone recognises the value of each individual and to encourage an awareness of and a response to the needs of others.
- To foster an appetite for learning and to develop self-discipline, initiative, responsibility and perseverance.
- To involve the students in the life-long process of education and to ensure that everyone achieves some degree of success in life.
- To value all kinds of achievement and to learn to cope with success and failure

NATURE OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

As a Catholic school

Religious Education is a core subject on the school curriculum and an integral part of the ethos of the school. Religious Education is provided for students in accordance with the doctrines, practices and traditions of the Catholic Church that derives its thrust and ultimate foundation from the person of Christ.

Religious Education has nothing in common with indoctrination that amounts to teaching a student a religious way of behaving and believing or trying to 'convert' to Catholicism. This type of teaching deliberately harms students by undermining their natural ability to reason. In contrast, as a school we are committed to the deepest respect for both faith and reason as they contribute significantly to the formation of rational and mature citizens of a democratic society.

Three types of learning in Religious Education are evident in our school.

1. **'Learning into religion'** Students are provided with religious instruction and experience, such as prayer and sacramental participation, that will help them to grow into their faith and in their understanding of the Catholic tradition.
2. **'Learning about religion'** While particular focus is given to Christianity, students are exposed to a broad range of religious traditions and to the non-religious interpretation of life. Such a broad exposure seeks to develop, in students, powers of tolerance and mutual understanding and the skills needed to engage in meaningful dialogue with those of other or of no religious traditions.
3. **'Learning from religion'** Students evaluate both what has been learned and how it has impacted on their lived commitments. Students are invited to learn from what they are discovering.

Religious Education that the school provides is open to, and inclusive of, all students, of all faiths and those of none.

AIMS OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

In Scoil Mhuire agus Íde Religious Education endeavours to:

- Promote in each student, knowledge of his/her faith and its practice in everyday life.
- Enable students to appreciate the life and mission of Christ.
- Contribute to the spiritual and moral development of the students.
- Foster awareness that the human search for meaning is common to all peoples of all ages and all time.
- Explore how this search for meaning has found and continues to find, expression in religion.
- Identify how understandings of God, religious tradition, and in particular the Christian tradition, have contributed to the culture in which we live, and continue to have an impact on personal lifestyle, inter-personal relationships and relationships between individuals and their communities and contexts.
- Provide opportunities to deepen sacramental awareness and to participate in prayer and liturgy.
- Foster awareness of shared values such as justice, peace and the dignity of the human person.
- Promote right relationships with self, others, God and all of creation.
- Encourage students to celebrate the liturgical calendar.
- Heighten awareness, empathy and compassion for local needs/issues and global problems.
- Appreciate the richness of the teachings and practices of the great religious traditions of the world and to acknowledge the non-religious interpretation of life.
- Encourage **peer-teaching** where students of different faith traditions are invited to speak about their beliefs, sacred texts and rituals.

RATIONALE

The Religious Education policy allows us to reflect on what it means to be a Catholic school and to articulate our commitment to it. It also allows us to explore other religions.

CURRICULUM

Each class group has a Religion copy which is kept in the Religion room and has access to the Religion books “Inspire” by educate.ie for Junior Students and “Pathways to Purpose” by educate.ie for Senior Students.

JUNIOR CYCLE

In 1st, 2nd and 3rd year the Junior Cycle Religious Education Syllabus is followed.

The aims of Junior Cycle Religious Education are to:

- Provide students with a framework for encountering and engaging with the variety of religious traditions in Ireland and elsewhere.
- Promote an understanding and appreciation of why people believe, as well as tolerance and respect for the values and beliefs of all.

The course explores all 5 major world religions, addresses moral decision-making, ethics and values, and considers religion in society and culture today.

TEXT BOOK

- **Inspire** by Educate.ie, Authors Michael Purcell and Ailis Travers.

TRANSITION YEAR

The aims of Transition year Religious Education are to:

- To assist young people in viewing themselves positively and accurately as spiritual human beings with choices.
- This is accomplished by examination of relationships with self, others and God.
- Heighten awareness of local needs and global problems.
- Encourage students to participate in and celebrate the Liturgical Calendar.

The Course consists of the St. Vincent de Paul Programme which is based on Social Justice.

They then complete an Action Project "**S.V.P. Toy and Treats Appeal**" for Christmas.

Alpha Youth Programme is a series of interactive sessions which allows **students** a space to explore their faith.

SENIOR CYCLE

The aims of Senior Cycle Religious Education are to:

- Explore some of the questions people ask when searching for meaning in life.
- Reflect on issues dealing with morality, sexuality, peace and justice.

The course

- Explores Religion vs. Secular world views
- Analyses living a Life of Faith
- Addresses social issues such as homelessness, environmental stewardship and social media.

TEXTBOOK

- Pathways to Purpose by Educate.ie Author Aiden McLean Moran.

FACILITIES AND RESOURCES

- Classroom based teachers.
- Local Clergy support.
- Department of Education and Science, Religious Education Support Service.
- Diocesan Inservice.
- Parents.
- Prayer Room.
- Local Community Groups.
- Religious Education Notice Board.
- Diocesan Advisor - Sr. Mary Andrew
- Religious Education Folder on shared Google drive for all teachers to access resources.
- Audio Visual Equipment.
- Variety of textbooks and resources in the school.

- Variety of Religion books in the Library.

WITHDRAWAL FROM RELIGIOUS EDUCATION CLASSES

Scoil Mhuire agus Íde respects and acknowledges the rights of parents who require their son or daughter to be excluded from Religious education. The manner in which such an 'opt out' is facilitated is related to available resources within the school and complies with the school's policies on curriculum, supervision and child safeguarding.

Two options that are provided for students when a request for 'opt out' from Religious Education is made include:

1. Staying within the classroom following an educationally appropriate activity, for example, students of other faiths are required to use the time to study something relating to their own religious tradition, such as a sacred text. Humanist and non-believing students are required to read relevant literature, for example, *Man's Search for Meaning* by Viktor Frankl.
2. Parents remove their son/daughter from the school premises for the duration of Religious Education.

An appropriate procedure to facilitate a request for withdrawal from Religious Education is as follows:

1. A written notification from the parent/guardian to the principal.
2. The principal meets with the parent/guardian.
3. The principal explains the Religious Education policy and the two options the school can provide for the withdrawal of their son/daughter from Religious Education classes.

STAFFING

We consider Religious Education to be such an integral part of our school ethos and school community that it is imperative that we give it the status it deserves. That means looking at the appointment and selection of qualified teachers and its place on the school timetable and the allocation of class periods as per Board of Management requirements.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION CO-ORDINATOR

Ms. Jade McMahon

The role of the Religious Education co-ordinator is to:

- Establish and overlook the subject plan for each year level.
- Liaise with principal re timetabling of religion and the allocation of class periods, liturgical celebrations and retreats.
- Update and maintain sacred spaces and prayer room.
- Remind teachers of the important liturgical celebrations, feast days and holy days.
- Organise Morning Prayer weekly - school intercom.
- Ensure a high standard and effective delivery of Religious Education.
- Support Religious Education teachers in and out of the classroom.
- Ensure all resources are placed on a shared drive for Religion teachers to access easily.
- Organise regular meetings of the religion department.
- Organise in-service days.
- Communicate with the Diocesan Advisor re school visits etc.
- Implement and review the policy.
- Liaise with Diocesan – Local clergy.
- Organise retreats and charity work.

STAFF SUPPORT AND DEVELOPMENT

Effective Religious Education does not just happen spontaneously or accidentally. The very nature of the Religious Education class requires teachers of Religious Education to keep 'upgrading' and enhancing their teaching skills and resources.

Therefore, it is important that:

- Management is supportive of all Religious Education both in and out of the classroom.
- Teachers with a qualification in Religious Education are timetabled to teach this subject.
- All Religious Education teachers are encouraged to attend Diocesan In-service.
- A budget is provided to support teaching and learning in this area.

Outside support is received from:

- Diocesan Advisor.
- Trustees of the school.
- Religious Education Support Service.
- Diocesan Clergy.

LITURGY

All staff and students are encouraged to participate in the Liturgical Life of the School.

To ensure that significant liturgical events are celebrated and recognised throughout the school year the following take place:

- Each class group has an opening of the school year mass celebrated by our local clergy and has school choir participation.
- Prayer service and other associated remembrance activities for the month of November e.g. Prayer wall.
- Advent and Lenten Services of Reconciliation.
- Whole School mass in our local church to celebrate the Feast of the Immaculate Conception.
- Whole School mass in our local church
6th January to celebrate Feast of the Epiphany.
- Ash Wednesday Service.
- St. Patrick's day Celebration.
- Carol Service.
- Catholic School's Week – activities and prayer services.
- Intercultural week.
- Retreats facilitated by An Tobar Nua, Holy Family Mission and Home for the Harvest.
- Morning Prayer over the intercom weekly and daily during Catholic Schools week.
- Transition Year and Leaving Cert Graduation Mass.
- Mini - pilgrimages – Visit Our Lady's Grotto during May, TY class visit our local Holy Wells.

OUTREACH PROGRAMMES

Peace and justice are an integral part of a Religious Education programme. Students are encouraged to empathise and show compassion for local and global justice issues.

Students participate in the following:

- Carol singing to raise funds.
- Carol singing in the local Nursing Home.
- Transition Year Community Involvement.
- Student Council holds regular fundraising events for charities such as Focus Ireland and S.V.D.P. First-years also put together gift baskets for those in need.
- Shoe Box Appeal.
- Display boards featuring newspaper articles etc.
- St. Vincent de Paul Toy and Treats Appeal for Christmas.

GUEST PRESENTATIONS

Guest presentations in Religion must be in accordance with the Catholic ethos of the school. During such a presentation a teacher will always be present.

RETREATS

Retreats are encouraged and promoted.

The purpose of retreats is to:

Provides a reflective space for students to deepen their understanding of the content of Religious Education programmes by engaging in creative activities, group discussion, meditation and prayer.

Students, who do not participate in the retreat, attend timetabled classes on the day.

The Board of Management contributes towards the cost of the retreats.

1st Years participate in a retreat facilitated by Home for the Harvest.

2nd Years participate in a retreat facilitated by Home for the Harvest.

4th Years participate in a retreat facilitated by An Tobar Nua.

5th Years participate in a retreat facilitated by Holy Family Mission.

PARENT INVOLVEMENT

There is an opportunity for parents to be informed about the content of the Religious Education programme through:

- Enrolment Meeting with parents.
- Parent-Teacher Meetings.
- First year and Transition-year information night.

Parents are involved in the Religious Education programme by their presence at:

- Opening Year school Mass.
- Graduation Mass.
- Liturgical Celebrations.
- Catholic School's Week activities.

DIOCESAN SUPPORT

The Diocesan Advisor visits the school twice a year to meet with the Principal, Religious Education Co-ordinator, chaplain and religion teachers.

The Diocesan Advisor provides:

- Update on Diocesan and National programmes of events.
- Advise on policy and subject plans.
- Creative ideas for religion lessons, meditation and Liturgical events.
- Monthly on-line resources.
- Support by attending Masses, concerts and other celebrations.
- Support for a school when there is a critical event.
- Ongoing support through letter, phone and email.

POLICY MONITORING AND TIMEFRAME

This policy will be reviewed bi-annually. Feedback from students, parents, and staff will inform future development.

Policy Effective Date: 19/11/25

Next Review Date: 19/11/27

Signed: 

Date: 19/11/25

(Chairperson of Board of Management)

Signed: 

Date: 19/11/25

(Principal)