

Polasaí Oideachais Reiligiúnaigh

Religious Education Policy



Réamhrá (*Introduction*)

This policy was formulated by the staff and ratified by the Board of Governors of Naíscoil agus Bunscoil Bheanna Boirche. It is based on the Core Syllabus for Religious Education (1993, revised in 2007), drawn up by the four main churches and identified by the Department of Education. Although the Core Syllabus for Religious Education is not stipulated in the Northern Ireland Primary Curriculum (Irish Medium), there is an overarching mandate from the Department of Education to have the Core Syllabus treated as “core” in the teaching of Religious Education. The Core Syllabus is supplemented with further material and resources that help us ensure that teaching of religious education in our school is done in an objective, critical, and pluralistic manner.

This policy is also informed by our school’s ethos and mission statement and by key curriculum and guidance documents. At Naíscoil agus Bunscoil Bheanna Boirche, we are committed to providing a nurturing environment based on mutual respect, kindness, and inclusivity, where a love of learning and a love of our Irish language and culture are fostered and celebrated. This policy reflects our dedication to the holistic development of our children in a caring and supportive community.

Cuspóirí an Oideachais Reiligiúnaigh (*Aims of Religious Education*)

Religious Education in the primary school enables pupils to develop a positive sense of their own identity and beliefs, and to have a respect for the beliefs and values of others. It provides opportunities for pupils to ask questions about the world in which they live and to reflect on their own beliefs, values and practices.

The teaching of RE in Bunscoil Bheanna Boirche will:

- Provide pupils with opportunities to develop a positive sense of their own identity and beliefs.
- Foster a respect for the beliefs and values of others.
- Develop pupils' knowledge and understanding of the Christian faith and other world religions.
- Encourage pupils to think about universal human questions and to shape their own attitudes and values.
- Help pupils to develop skills in discussing religious and ethical issues reasonably and respectfully at an age-appropriate level.
- Enable children to make a positive contribution to a society that is rich in diversity.
- Promote acceptance and appreciation of other cultures and religions, fostering an attitude of inclusion and celebration of diversity, working against racism, sectarianism and prejudice.

Fís agus Éiteas (Vision and Ethos)

“At Náiscoil agus Bunscoil Bheanna Boirche, we strive to provide a nurturing environment based on mutual respect, kindness and inclusivity, in which all members of our community feel safe, valued and supported, a sanctuary in which a love of learning and a love of our Irish and Gaelic language and culture is fostered and celebrated. We value the strong community spirit in our school with relationships underpinned by patience, compassion and understanding, fairness and honesty, and the shared objective of the holistic development of our children, attending to their needs as best we can, celebrating our successes both in school and outside, celebrating identity, individuality and diversity, and that which unites us in our community.”

Our school's ethos is built on a foundation of values including respect, patience, compassion, understanding, fairness, and honesty. We strive to create a learning environment where all members of our community feel safe, valued, nurtured, and supported.

In line with our mission, the teaching of Religious Education (RE) at Bunscoil Bheanna Boirche aims to:

- Develop a positive sense of self and respect for the beliefs and values of others.
- Enhance pupils' spiritual and ethical awareness.
- Foster a spirit of inquiry and an appreciation for diversity.
- Encourage learners to develop their interest and curiosity in the world around them.

Curaclam (*Curriculum*)

Bunús an Churaclaim (*Foundation of the Curriculum*)

The foundation of Religious Education at Bunscoil Bheanna Boirche is the **Core Syllabus for Religious Education**. This syllabus provides the minimum content for RE and is structured around three key areas at Foundation Stage and at Key Stages 1 and 2:

1. **The Revelation of God**
2. **The Christian Church**
3. **Morality**

Our approach is also guided by the **Religious Education in the Primary School – Non-Statutory Guidance Materials**, which helps us to effectively implement the Core Syllabus and link RE to other areas of the curriculum.

Scéim Teagaisc (*Teaching Scheme*)

To deliver the Core Syllabus, Bunscoil Bheanna Boirche uses the Irish language version of **Grow in Love, “I nGrá Dé”**. This programme provides a comprehensive framework for teaching the core tenets of Christianity in a way that is engaging and appropriate for primary school children. Further information on “I nGrá Dé” can be found at <https://www.growinlove.ie/en/>. This is further complemented by **“Beo go Deo”** resources, the Irish language version of **Alive-O**. Additional RE work is completed during the Catholic Sacrament years, i.e. Rang 3, Rang 4 and Rang 7, especially in the weeks leading up to First Confession, First Holy Communion and Confirmation.

Alongside the three areas outlined in the Core Syllabus, the following themes are included in the teaching of Religious Education:

- Special Books and Stories
- People Who Care
- Special Places
- Festivals and Celebrations
- Belonging and Community
- The Natural World and Gratitude / Responsibilities

Ionchuitsitheacht agus Creidimh Dhomhanda (*Inclusivity and World Religions*)

Reflecting the inclusive ethos of our school, the RE curriculum extends beyond the Core Syllabus to include the study of other world religions. We believe it is essential for our pupils to grow as citizens of a religiously and culturally diverse society, aware of similarities and respectful of differences.

While the Core Syllabus focuses on Christianity, we supplement our scheme with dedicated study units on other major world faiths. This approach ensures that all children, regardless of their own religious or non-religious background, feel included and valued. The teaching of world religions / Religious Education is not intended to state what is true or false, but to help pupils understand the beliefs and practices of others. Stories from different religions are taught as religious stories, and their significance to those faiths is explored.

This approach is in line with guidance that encourages schools to teach "beyond the core" to reflect the religious diversity children experience in society.

Alongside the "I nGrá Dé" core scheme, classes are also taught about the following world religions. This is not a prescriptive nor exhaustive list, and teachers will from time to time discuss festivals, events, stories from other faiths / religions throughout the year, and many of these themes will also be touched upon in our PDMU lessons.

- Rang 1: Hinduism
- Rang 2: Buddhism
- Rang 3: Sikhism
- Rang 4: Islam
- Rang 5: Celtic Festivals
- Rang 6: Judaism
- Rang 7: Christianity and the Celts

Adhradh le Chéile (*Collective Worship*)

The Education and Libraries (Northern Ireland) Order 1986 mandates that daily collective worship takes place in all publicly-funded schools in Northern Ireland. Ensuring we are adhering to statutory requirements while also respecting our distinct ethos, as well as our non-denominational status and value of inclusivity, staff at the school have developed a ***Machnamh Scoile*** (School Reflection) attached as Appendix B, which is recited by the teacher each morning just before register is taken. Pupils are very welcome and encouraged to join in with the teacher should they wish, and are also very welcome to choose to remain silent and respectful, taking the time to have their own personal reflection or moment of silence. Our School Reflection was carefully composed to ensure adherence to existing legislation, while also respecting our school ethos and diverse school community. It is a reflection of thanksgiving and appreciation, and a celebration of our distinct school values. Pupils, and staff, are very welcome of course on an individual basis to associate this moment of reflection with their own religious beliefs should they wish.

Tarraingt Amach (*Withdrawal*)

Religious Education lessons are taught at the same time in every class throughout the school – 1.20pm on a Wednesday afternoon. Via this policy, parents are made aware of their legal right to have their children withdrawn wholly or partially from RE lessons and/or collective worship as detailed above, without the need to explain or justify their reasons. Children can be withdrawn from these lessons by completion and submission of the ***Religious Education Withdrawal Form*** attached as Appendix A, and accommodations will be made for children who are withdrawn from lessons. These accommodations will take the form of suitable age-appropriate activities, such as reading, play, talking and listening exercises, under the supervision of designated classroom assistants.

Ullmhúchán do na Sacraimintí Caitliceacha (*Preparation for the Catholic Sacraments*)

We offer pupils and families the opportunity to prepare for and undertake the Catholic Sacraments. These are done in Rang 3 (**An Chéad Fhaoistin / First Confession**), Rang 4 (**An Chéad Chomaoineach / First Holy Communion**) and Rang 7 (**An Cóineartú / Confirmation**). During the first term of these years, we communicate to parents to inform them that preparations for the Sacraments will begin in Term 2, and parents are asked to give consent for their child participating in these preparations and in the Sacraments.

Additional work is required in preparing the pupils for the Sacraments, which will involve more lessons in the lead up to them including homework, and may also include visits to the church. Arrangements are made to ensure that while these pupils are preparing for the Sacraments, pupils who are not preparing for the Sacraments are engaging in alternative suitable activities which may include PDMU work, talking and listening activities, project work, etc.

Monatóireacht agus Athbhreithniú (*Monitoring and Review*)

This policy will be reviewed regularly by the staff and Board of Governors to ensure it continues to meet the needs of our pupils and reflects the values and ethos of Bunscoil Bheanna Boirche.

Ratified by Governors: March 2026

NAÍScoil AGUS BUNSCOIL BHEANNA BOIRCHE

Form for Withdrawal from Religious Education and/or Collective Worship

Section 1: Pupil Details

Name of pupil: _____

Name of parent / carer submitting request: _____

Class: _____

Relationship to pupil: _____

Section 2: Request for Withdrawal

I request that my child be withdrawn from:

All Religious Education classes

Daily collective reflection

Specific RE topics / units (please specify below):

Specific elements of collective worship (please specify below, i.e. prayers, hymns, religious assemblies, particular speakers):

Start Date:

I request that withdrawal arrangements begin immediately

I request that withdrawal arrangements begin ___/___/___

Section 3: Confirmation

By signing below, I confirm that I am exercising my statutory right to withdraw my child from Religious Education and/or collective worship (daily collective reflection) as outlined above. I understand that:

- I do not need to give reasons for this request;
- The school must implement this request promptly and without negotiation;
- This request will remain in place until I submit a written request to end or amend it.

Signature of parent / carer: _____ Date: _____

Section 4: Confirmation of receipt (to be completed by school)

Date received: _____

Date of acknowledgement issued: _____

Arrangements begin: _____

Name of staff member processing request: _____

Gabhaimis buíochas as an lá seo
a bronnadh orainn inniu,
Lenár gcairde ar scoil,
ag foghlaim is ag súgradh.

Tá muid beannaithe leis na daoine
atá againn inár saol,
Ár muintir ag tabhairt aire dúinn
go croíúil flaithiúil fial.

Ag déanamh roghanna maithe,
ag caitheamh le chéile le cineáltas,
Ar scáth a chéile ag fás go sona,
le meas, le dóchas, le cairdeas.

Le Gaeilge inár mbéal,
agus grá inár gcroí,
Agus buíoch as an lá seo,
go rachaidh an ghrian a luí.