



St. Fintan's NS Religious Education Policy

Introduction

St Fintan's NS is a co-educational primary school under the patronage of the Catholic Archbishop of Dublin. It is a mainstream primary school catering for a full cross section of pupils.

The Aim of Religious Education in a Catholic School

The aim of Religious Education is to help children mature in relation to their spiritual, moral and religious lives, through their encounter with, exploration and celebration of their Catholic faith.¹

The Vision for Religious Education in a Catholic School

In the Irish context the educational vision of the Church is a pastoral one. It acknowledges the complementary, connected, but different roles of the home, school and parish community in the faith education of children.

In this vision parents* are the first and the primary teachers of their children in faith and the home is the first school of faith.

The parish is where children learn to worship, where they meet Jesus Christ in sacramental celebrations and where they experience and share in the mission of the Church.

Religious education in the Catholic primary school has two distinct but complementary dimensions; the educational dimension and the faith formation dimension.

- The educational dimension is centred and founded on the formal curriculum and focuses on the values and teachings of the Catholic Church. It teaches children the skills of spiritual, moral and religious literacy. The Religious Education outcomes at each level in the curriculum reflect this dimension.

- The faith formation dimension forms the children's characters in the virtues and values of Jesus, supports their faith development and helps them to experience what it means to be a member of the Church. The faith formation goals in the curriculum (p 134-143) support and reflect this dimension.

An important part of this vision is our response to religious and cultural change in our society. Catholic schools are places where all are respected and valued. This includes the many different levels of faith that we will encounter in both our teachers and pupils and those pupils who are of other faiths and different stances for living.

*The term 'parent' implies any person with parental responsibility such as foster parent, carer, guardian or local authority.

¹ Catholic Pre-School and Primary Religious Education Curriculum for Ireland page 31

Aim of Religious Education Policy

The purpose of this Religious Education Policy is

- To ensure that we strive to understand and promote religious education in a Catholic primary school as never simply one subject among many, but the foundation of the entire educational process ²
- To ensure that formal teaching in matters of belief, values and practice that equip children for a free and intelligent expression of personal faith within the family, Church and wider society is provided. (based on Share the Good News 39)
- To appreciate the richness of all religious traditions, especially those present in our school community, and to provide a framework to encounter these traditions
- To provide appropriate religious education for the different levels of faith commitment that we encounter in our classrooms
- To lead to a greater degree of clarity in respect of aims, procedures and roles for RE in the school.
- To assist all members of staff in the teaching of Religion
- To consider strategies that respond to the needs of children of different faiths and other stances for living in terms of religious education

The Principal and Religious Education

- The principal ensures the Religious Education Policy is implemented
- The principal ensures Religious Education is timetabled in each classroom for the designated time of 30 mins daily
- The principal encourages and supports the teachers who are preparing children for the Sacraments
- The principal checks that all teachers have the relevant Grow in Love material needed for classroom teaching
- The principal maintains a good working relationship with the parish
- The principal offers opportunities for in-service and faith development.

Prayer in our School

- School prayer at assemblies, communal prayer time and liturgical celebrations is practiced during the school year e.g. Christmas Prayer Service, Advent and Lent Celebrations, Catholic Schools Week Celebration, Graduation Mass
- Important Feast Days are celebrated throughout the Church Year
- There is time for prayer in every classroom, such as at the beginning of the day, before and after lunch and before the children leave at home time
- Children know their formal prayers and Mass responses as indicated by the curriculum; Level 1 p59; Level 2 page 74; Level 3 p 94; Level 4 page 120
- Children have the opportunity to experience different forms of prayer, e.g. meditation, contemplation or spontaneous prayer

² Catholic Pre-School and Primary Religious Education Curriculum for Ireland page 12

Religion in the Classroom

- Religious Education is timetabled in each classroom for the designated time of 2 ½ hours per week
- Religious Education is included in all teachers' fortnightly notes and Cúntas Míosuil.
- All teachers have access to a copy of the Pre-School and Primary Religious Education Curriculum for Ireland
- All teachers have the relevant Grow in Love material needed to teach religious education in their classroom
- All resources and relevant communication from the Diocesan Advisor's office are distributed to staff
- Opportunities for ongoing professional development are regularly offered to teachers
- There is a sacred space in every classroom. This space reflects the movement of the liturgical seasons. It also contains samples of the children's work, religious symbols and God's creation
- There are symbols of the Catholic faith in every classroom e.g. a holy water font, religious icon or picture, cross or crucifix

Home-School Links

In order to better help parents understand what their children are learning in Religious Education a link with home is made regularly.

This is done by sending Grow in Love books home regularly and the home/school link ideas and topics are available on www.growinlove.ie. The parents of all children are invited to any school/family mass, school Nativities and are also involved through Grow in Love in the preparation of their children for First Holy Communion, First Penance and Confirmation. We encourage daily prayers at home as well as in school. Parents can be invited to prayer services, Mass and other religious celebrations throughout the year.

Sacramental Preparation and Celebration

- In school the children are prepared for the sacraments in partnership with home and the parish
- The school and parish engage with parents to plan for sacramental preparation
- The school supports the Diocesan guidelines on how best to prepare for and celebrate the sacraments of First Penance, First Holy Communion and Confirmation
- Parents and children are encouraged to engage in the parish-based programmes provided for their preparation for First Holy Communion and Confirmation, such as Do this in Memory and You Shall be my Witness
- The celebration of First Penance takes place in the local church. Parents are invited to participate in the Sacrament with their children
- In preparation for the sacraments, the children learn and memorise the relevant prayers

Parish Links

- Relationships between school and parish leadership are fostered and encouraged
- Parish leadership, alongside the school, will plan for visitation of classrooms, celebration of Feast Days, key liturgical celebrations in the school calendar, sacramental preparation and celebration in the school/church where feasible

Inclusion of Pupils of Other Faiths and Traditions

Our school is a welcoming, inclusive school. Children of all faiths and no faith are welcome.

- The Admissions Policy clearly states that the school is a Catholic School
- The Admissions Policy makes clear that we welcome diversity and inclusion
- Parents are made aware that the Catholic ethos of our school is not confined to the religion class only, but permeates the whole school day
- The class teacher and pupils will show interest in any pupil marking a special feast in his/her tradition while attending school
- Children are helped to recognise that everyone, regardless of their ethnic origin, colour or faith, is created in God's image and is precious in God's eyes

Opt Out

If parents wish to have their children opt out of formal religious education the school offers that the pupil can

- Stay within the classroom and engage in an educationally appropriate activity
- Be withdrawn by a parent for the duration of the religious lesson

Ratification and Review

The implementation of this policy will commence immediately on ratification by the Board of Management on November 25th 2024. It will be reviewed every three years in the third term or as circumstances may warrant.



Date 25/11/24

Chairperson of the Board of Management



Date 25/11/24

Principal