

Scoil Mhuire gan Smál, Cill Choirle

Religious Education Policy



Policy Details

Name of Policy: Religious Education Policy

Date Developed: November 2019 Signed by

Review Date: January 2025

Chairperson: *Geraldine Mc*

Ref Code:

Principal: *Donna Kirby*

Edition: 1

RE Co-ordinator

Date commenced: *30 January 2020*

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management of Scoil Mhuire gan Smál, Kilkenny on the 29 day of January 2020, and is in line with the Religious Education Policy of the Archdiocese of Armagh and is subject to review every five years. It will be reviewed on the 29 day of January 2025.

Background

“Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder
them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these.”
Matthew 19:14

Catholic schools are inclusive schools which are founded on the principles of equality, respect and love. The Catholic school has an integral part to play in helping children to experience God's love, understand the teachings of Jesus and to embrace a way of life rooted in a friendship with Him.

Pope Francis reminds us that the first proclamation that must ring out over and over in our Religious Education is that “Jesus Christ loves you; He gave His life to save you; and now He is living at your side every day to enlighten, strengthen and free you”.

In the Catholic school, the educational mission of the Church finds a particular important expression.

As with all schools, the Catholic school is concerned with the ongoing development of the potential of every individual. What is distinctive, however, in the Catholic school is that it is centered on the person of Jesus Christ, His teaching, and living a life that emulates these Christian values.

Introductory Statement

Scoil Mhuire gan Smál is a 12 teacher Catholic school situated in Kilkenny near Dundalk, Co. Louth under the patronage of the Catholic Archbishop of Armagh Eamon Martin. The school models and promotes a philosophy inspired by belief in God and traditional Catholic values. We provide religious education for the pupils in accordance with the doctrines, practices and ethos of the Catholic Church. This school enrolls pupils of other faiths or no faith in the school, subject to the enrolment criteria, and respects their beliefs and practices in accordance with the school ethos of inclusivity. This policy developed in line with the Archdiocese of Armagh Framework Policy Document for Primary Religious Education in November 2019 by R.E. Co-Ordinator Catherine Donnelly.

In Scoil Mhuire gan Smál we proudly display the *Agreed Schedule for the Catholic Primary School in the Republic of Ireland*.

‘A Roman Catholic school (which is established in connection with the Minister) aims at promoting the full and harmonious development of the person of the pupil: intellectual, physical, cultural, moral and spiritual, including living relationships with God and other people. The school models and promotes a philosophy of life inspired by belief in God and in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The Catholic school provides Religious Education for the pupils in accordance with the doctrines, practices and tradition of the Roman Catholic Church and promotes the formation of the pupils in the Catholic Faith.’

Vision Statement

The Catholic School...

- Has at its heart the mission and ministry of Jesus Christ.
- Builds an environment of care and concern for others that is rooted in Catholic social teaching.
- Creates a safe and happy learning environment where every child is encouraged and enabled to develop to their full and unique potential as human beings, made in the image and likeness of God.
- Seeks educational excellence while remaining faithful to its distinctive vision and approach.
- Is an inclusive and respectful community, welcoming students of all denominations and of none.
- Acknowledges the role of parents as the first teachers in the ways of faith and provides opportunities for their participation in the life of the school.
- Works in partnership with parents and the parish community to keep the light of faith burning brightly.
- Provides religious education programmes that confirm and deepen the child's understanding of the Catholic faith so that every child will be as articulate in their faith as they are in all other areas of the curriculum.
- Nurtures the child's appreciation and understanding of the sacramental life of the Church.
- Displays the symbols of our rich Catholic faith tradition.
- Spends time as a school community in reflection, prayer, ritual, celebrating the Eucharist and other sacraments in order to develop the spiritual life of each person in the school community.

Mission Statement:

- Scoil Mhuire gan Smál is a co-educational, Catholic, primary school which strives to provide a well-ordered, caring, happy and secure atmosphere where the intellectual, spiritual, physical, moral and cultural needs of the pupils are identified and addressed.
- While Scoil Mhuire gan Smál is a school with a Catholic ethos, it also has due recognition for all other religions.
- Scoil Mhuire gan Smál will strive to promote, both individually and collectively, the professional and personal development of teachers through staff development programmes.
- Scoil Mhuire gan Smál will encourage the involvement of parents through home/school contacts and through their involvement in the Scoil Mhuire gan Smál Parents Association.
- Scoil Mhuire gan Smál will endeavour to enhance the self-esteem of everyone in the school community, to imbue in pupils respect for people and property and to encourage in them the idea of being responsible.
- Scoil Mhuire gan Smál will promote gender equity amongst the teachers and pupils.
- Déanfaimid iarracht Gaeilge a labhairt.
- Our school motto is; Happy children; Healthy citizens

GENERAL INFORMATION

Diocesan Information

Diocese: Archdiocese of Armagh

School Patron / Senior Trustee: Archbishop Eamon Martin

Co. Louth Education Secretary: Mrs Niamh Black

Parish Information

Kilkenny parish, along with the parishes of Darver & Dromiskin, Knockbridge and Louth comprises the Pastoral Area of Our Lady Queen of Peace. In this Pastoral Area there are four priests, six churches, six schools and approximately 2,000 Catholic families.

The priests of Kilkenny parish are Very Rev Fr. Gerry Campbell P.P. and Rev Brian MacRaois. The Chairperson of our Pastoral Council is Geraldine Kirk.

School Information

The name of our school is Scoil Mhuire gan Smál after our church The Church of the Immaculate Conception.

Our chaplain is Rev Fr. Brian MacRaois.

Our Board of Management members are Mrs. Geraldine Kirk, Fr Gerry Campbell P.P., Mrs. Donna Kirby, Mrs. Muireann Johnston, Mrs. Niamh Larkin, Mr. Colman Burgess, Mrs. Anne Sheehy and Mr. Charlie Geoghegan.

Responsibility for ethos Mrs. Donna Kirby

Religious Education Co-Ordinator is Mrs. Catherine Donnelly.

1. Policy Statement

- 1.1. At Scoil Mhuire gan Smál our mission is to develop as a community of faith and learning, providing the highest quality of education and offering formation through the promotion of the Gospel values, through celebration and worship, and through service to the common good.
- 1.2. We believe that faith in Jesus Christ is central to the full and harmonious development of the person: intellectual, physical, emotional, moral and spiritual.
- 1.3. Our school provides Religious Education as a core subject in the curriculum.
- 1.4. At Scoil Mhuire gan Smál we value and promote the distinctive but complementary roles of home, school and parish as together we work to promote the well-being and freedom of every person, made in the image and likeness of God.

2. Policy Purpose

- 2.1. The aim of Religious Education in the school is principally to help children mature in relation to their spiritual, moral and religious lives, through their encounter with, exploration and celebration of the Catholic faith. Its main function is to explore step by step the mystery of

Christ, the teaching of the Church and its application to daily life. It needs to be clearly focused and should encourage young people to be critical, analytical and reflective.

- 2.2. In a Catholic school, therefore, the Religious Education of pupils is accomplished in two equal and complementary ways:
 - (i) through the totality of the experiences in the school and;
 - (ii) through the Religious Education programme, *Grow in Love*.
- 2.3. A community hands on its faith and values most effectively by living them. Faith development should be promoted through the entirety of the school experience - including regular contact with the wider parish community, celebration of the sacraments, and assemblies centred on prayer - as much as by the learning which takes place in the formal Religious Education class.
- 2.4. Children will learn how to participate in prayer, they will know the traditional prayers by the year they receive Holy Communion for the First Time and be competent in saying them.
- 2.5. Children will develop virtue, personal and social responsibility, ecological consciousness and the ability to act in accordance with an informed conscience when making moral decisions.
- 2.6. Children will develop Christian attitudes and values: for example, love, justice, compassion, truthfulness and respect and they will develop an understanding of what membership of the Church means.

3. Scope of Policy

- 3.1. This policy applies to the Pupils, Parents and Guardians, Teachers, Special Needs Assistants, Principal, RE Co-ordinator, Chaplain, Board of Management, and the Diocesan Advisor.

4. Legal Framework

- 4.1. Religious Education in primary schools takes place on the island of Ireland within circumstances supported by Education Acts in both jurisdictions. The Education Act (1998) states the requirement that schools, "promote the moral, spiritual, social and personal development of students.... in consultation with their parents, having regard for the characteristic spirit of the school" (Government of Ireland Education Act).
- 4.2. In the Irish Republic, the various patron bodies are responsible for the development and implementation of the curriculum of Religious Education in primary schools.

5. Religious Education Curriculum and Programme

- 5.1. The Catholic Preschool and Primary Religious Education Curriculum for Ireland, published by the Irish Episcopal Conference in 2015, is the formal Religious Education programme for primary schools for the whole island of Ireland.

- 5.1.1. It provides a structured outline of what religious education, as an academic discipline in Catholic schools, contributes to the Catholic education and formation of young people
- 5.1.2. It provides a solid foundation for *Grow in Love*, the religious education programme, used in Scoil Mhuire gan Smál and all other resource material used to enhance religious education lessons.
- 5.1.3. It emphasises the cross-curricular nature of religious education, which pervades all academic subjects, and aspects of life and education in Catholic schools, for instance, policies concerned with anti-bullying, RSE, SPHE.

6. Roles and Responsibilities

6.1. Board of Management:

- 6.1.1. Has overall responsibility for the curriculum in a Catholic school.
- 6.1.2. Is guided in its management of Religious Education by the principal, teachers and RE Co-ordinator.
- 6.1.3. Has a particular responsibility for the appointment of teachers who are suitably qualified and who will support and promote the aims and objectives of the Religious Education policy and ethos of the Catholic school.
- 6.1.4. Should encourage and support the principal and teachers in their personal and professional faith development.
- 6.1.5. Should ensure that Religious Education is well resourced with suitable catechetical materials and that the correct time is allocated for its delivery in the classroom.

6.2. Principal:

- 6.2.1. Has an essential role in promoting the Catholic ethos of the school as is evident by her/his words and actions.
- 6.2.2. Endeavours to make possible a coherent and co-ordinated approach to Religious Education, by working closely with the local parish community to ensure a holistic contribution to the pupils' deepening awareness and understanding of the faith into which they have been baptised.
- 6.2.3. Will ensure that teachers have access to ongoing professional development and formation in Religious Education.

6.3. RE Co-ordinator

- 6.3.1. The role of the RE Co-ordinator is of central importance in a Catholic school.
- 6.3.2. Ensures that the Catholic life of a school is sustained and nurtured in co-operation with the Board of Management the principal, the local parish community and the teachers.
- 6.3.3. She/he contributes significantly to the realisation of the overall Christian vision of the school.

6.4. Chaplain

- 6.4.1. Will visit the school regularly.
- 6.4.2. Will be available to provide pastoral care to the school community.
- 6.4.3. Will foster links between the home, school and parish.
- 6.4.4. Will support and encourage the sacramental preparation of pupils in collaboration with parents / guardians.
- 6.4.5. Will be familiar with the Religious Education programme, *Grow in Love*.

6.5. Teachers

- 6.5.1. Play a significant role in the lives of the children they teach.
- 6.5.2. Are one of the most formative influences in the pupil's lives and can do this by creating an open and caring atmosphere in their classrooms.
- 6.5.3. Do this by allowing children to feel valued and to recognise their potential and individuality.
- 6.5.4. Do this by helping children to develop respect for themselves, for others, for the world in which they live and for God.
- 6.5.5. Do this by respecting every child and their background.
- 6.5.6. Do this by respecting cultural diversity in a climate that promotes openness and communication.
- 6.5.7. Do this by developing within each child the knowledge that God loves them, and that God who has given them the gift of life cares for them.
- 6.5.8. Do this by helping children develop confidence and self-esteem.
- 6.5.9. Do this by helping children develop an understanding of the sacraments of the Church.
- 6.5.10. Do this by fostering links between the home, school and parish.
- 6.5.11. Do this by providing opportunities for prayer within the classroom.
- 6.5.12. Do this by instilling in young people an understanding of Gospel values and how to apply them to life, a life lived in the service of others.

6.6. Parents and Guardians

- 6.6.1. Scoil Mhuire gan Smál appreciates that parents and guardians are the primary educators of their children and therefore partnership between school and parents / guardians will be sustained and strengthened.
- 6.6.2. Scoil Mhuire gan Smál will provide information evenings for parents and guardians as required, in particular at induction and for sacramental classes.
- 6.6.3. Parents and guardians of 2nd class pupils are encouraged to become involved in the delivery of the Do This in Memory Of Me programme, which their child participates in, in preparation for First Penance and First Holy Communion.
- 6.6.4. Parents and guardians of 6th class pupils are encouraged to become involved in the preparation programme with their child for Confirmation.
- 6.6.5. The school engages in ongoing communication with parents/guardians regarding the religious education programme *Grow in Love* through the home activity, which they are encouraged to complete together with their child.
- 6.6.6. Parents and guardians are asked to support teachers in school by reinforcing Gospel values at home.

6.7. Diocesan Advisor

- 6.7.1.** The Archdiocese of Armagh, as part of its responsibility to support faith development in Catholic schools, provides guidance in the person of the Primary Diocesan Advisor for Religious Education.
- 6.7.2.** Has a responsibility to visit schools.
- 6.7.3.** Has a responsibility to monitor and evaluate the provision of Religious Education in schools, providing principals and RE co-ordinators with appropriate feedback and direction.
- 6.7.4.** Supports the Board of Management, school principal and RE co-ordinator in the faith life of the school.
- 6.7.5.** Supports priests in their role as school chaplains.
- 6.7.6.** Provide in-service programmes and resources for co-ordinators, teachers and chaplains.
- 6.7.7.** Offers support and advice on the development of Catholic ethos within schools.
- 6.7.8.** Encourages the use of, and makes provision for, retreat days for staff and pupils.
- 6.7.9.** Supports the school and parish in the development and implementation of sacramental preparation programmes and faith development programmes for families.
- 6.7.10.** Informs the Archbishop of the work and challenges encountered in schools in relation to Religious Education.
- 6.7.11.** Supports the school in the development and delivery of an RSE policy and programme which reflects the Catholic Ethos and respects the wishes of parents / guardians.

7. Pupils not Partaking in Catholic Religious Education

- 7.1.** No pupil shall receive, be present at, any religious instruction of which his/her parents / guardians disapprove.
- 7.2.** The periods of formal religious instruction are fixed so as to facilitate the withdrawal of pupils not partaking in Catholic Religious Instruction.
- 7.3.** Parents/Guardians who wish to withdraw their child from religious instruction have the option of collecting their child/children at religion time and returning them afterwards.
- 7.4.** Alternatively, children who do not take part in the Grow in Love Programme shall be given an alternative activity during religion time.
- 7.5.** All parents/guardians shall be informed of these options at the Induction meeting held in May/June before their child/children start school.

8. Monitoring and Evaluation

- 8.1.** Ongoing monitoring and evaluation of the Religious Education programme in school is essential. As with other subjects the coordinator in line with the school assessment policy should regularly monitor and evaluate the quality of provision within the school.

References

- 8.2. Policy of the Archdiocese of Armagh**
- 8.3. Education Act (1998)**
- 8.4. Enrolment Policy**
- 8.5. Anti-Bullying Policy**

