

Policy on Religious Education and Faith Development

Introduction

Presentation Girls' School is a Catholic school under the patronage of the Archbishop of Dublin and the trusteeship of the Laurence O'Toole Trust. The school models and promotes a philosophy of life inspired by belief in God and in the life of Jesus Christ.

It promotes Religious Education for the pupils in accordance with the doctrines, practices and traditions of the Catholic Church and promotes the formation of the pupils in the Catholic Faith. Non-Catholic pupils may be exempted from the religious education programme at the request of their parents

Relationship to School Ethos

The school was founded in 1823 by the Presentation Sisters. Entwined with the theology and philosophy of Catholic education is the educational philosophy of the Presentation Sisters as handed down by their foundress Nano Nagle and developed by succeeding Presentation Sisters and their colleagues. Presentation Education draws inspiration from and is guided by the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the spirit and life of Nano Nagle, the teachings of the Catholic Church. Respect for each pupil, staff member and parent is reflected in our school policy, irrespective of religious beliefs.

Aim of Religious Education Policy

Our policy promotes the development of a community of faith inspired by Gospel values and aims to enable each child

- To develop in an open, happy, stimulating and mutually respectful environment.
- To develop a love of learning and an openness to life-long learning
- To develop moral values and the ability to make good decisions
- To live a full life as a unique individual and to develop the full range of their abilities and talents in a balanced and integrated way.
- To develop as a social being who lives and cooperates generously with others and so contributes to the good of society.
- To develop an awareness of Social Justice in the local community and the wider world.

The school is a Presentation School. As a Presentation School particular emphasis is placed on:

- Respecting the dignity of each pupil, staff member and parent
- Cultivating good relationships

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- Being inclusive and being especially mindful of the disadvantaged and those with special needs
- Striving for excellence in all aspects of school life
- Promoting justice and care for the earth and all of God's creation

General Information

A) Diocese: Dublin Archdiocese
Patron: Archbishop Dermot Farrell

B) Parish: St. Mary's Maynooth
Parish Priest: Fr. Frank McEvoy
Curate: Fr. Paul Kelly

R.E. Coordinator: Aisling Byrne

Religious Education Programme

The Board of Management and the teachers have adopted the *Catholic Pre-school and Primary Religious Education Curriculum* approved and recommended by the Irish Hierarchy for use in Catholic Schools. Religious education is taught in each class daily for the recommended thirty minutes. The programme incorporates the recommended approach to religious education and preparation for the sacraments of Reconciliation, Eucharist and Confirmation. The programme is studied each day for 30 mins. A Christian ethos, however, permeates the school day and life of the school.

Whole School Dimension

Meaningful pictures, icons, statues and artworks are on display throughout the school building.

The major Catholic feasts are celebrated. They are marked with the aid of signs and symbols throughout the school.

- Advent – the Advent wreath
- Christmas – crib and tree
- Feast of St. Brigid – traditional crosses
- Feast of St. Patrick – depiction of story and shamrock
- Lent – Symbols of repentance and ashes
- Easter – Symbols of new life of resurrection

Symbols of Faith in the School and in Classrooms

- A Crucifix in each room
- A statue of Our Lady in each classroom
- Mission Statement in Reception Area

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- Sacred space in classrooms and Reception Area
- The Sacred Space changes periodically to reflect feast days/ celebrations
- The Icon of Nano Nagle

Social Justice in the School and in Classrooms

- Each year pupils are encouraged to collect items for the annual shoebox appeal . This enables them to become aware of those less fortunate at Christmas time.
- Each year 6th class pupils participate in a Social Justice initiative to raise awareness amongst our pupils of global challenges and to promote Social Justice and foster empathy with communities facing significant challenges.

Strands of Religious Education Curriculum

The Religious Education Curriculum is organised under 4 key strands:

- Christian Faith
- Word of God
- Christian Morality
- Liturgy and Prayer

Highlights of the Liturgical year that are embraced and celebrated are as follows:

- Mass at opening of the school year (1st to 6th class) and closing of school year when possible.
- Presentation Day – commemorating Nano Nagle
- Advent
- Carol Service at Christmas
- St. Brigid's Day
- St. Patrick's Day
- Distribution of Blessed Ashes on Ash Wednesday
- Holy Week – Stations of the Cross
- May Procession
- Celebration of First Confession and First Communion.
- Times of trauma or crisis and other occasions which from time to time are considered appropriate to mark or celebrate.

The pupils of the school join in co-operation with the parish

- At the celebration of Sacrament of Reconciliation, First Communion and Confirmation
- Family Masses and Do This in Memory Masses throughout the year
- Christmas Day Children's Mass (at the discretion on parents/guardians)

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- Holy Week – Children's Mass Holy Thursday; Stations of the Cross Good Friday; Children's Mass Easter Sunday. (at the discretion on parents/guardians)
- Retreat for 6th class

The Catholic education offered at Presentation Girls' School is conducted in collaboration with the children's parents and the local parish. We see our role as being supportive of the role of parents and parish.

Preparation for the Sacraments

- The children from 2nd class and their parents/guardians are involved in the Parish Programme, *Do This in Memory* to prepare the children for their First Confession and Communion.
- Sixth class girls and their parents/guardians are involved in the Parish Programme to prepare the children for their Confirmation
- The 6th class girls attend a retreat in the weeks leading to their Confirmation.
- The priests visit the school during the year to visit the classes in preparing for the Sacraments
- School uniform is worn for all sacrament ceremonies apart from First Communion.
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Pupils of other faiths or none

- When parents are enrolling their children they are informed that it is a Catholic School but that children of other faiths or no faith are welcome. Each child is welcome to participate in the religious education programme. However where parents do not wish their child to take part, they are invited to provide alternative appropriate work to be completed, within the classroom setting, or alternative work may be provided by the class teacher.
- Children are not removed from the class during the religious lesson as the school cannot provide supervision.
- When a class is attending a Mass or a Prayer Service and if parents do not wish their child(ren) being present at these events, parents may collect their child(ren) before the event by prior arrangement.
- Pupils of other faiths and none who are in sacramental classes may attend the reception in the school (with a parent or guardian who is responsible for them) held after the ceremonies. These pupils are also invited to be photographed with the other pupils in their class who have celebrated the sacraments.
- Inter- religious links are a part of the Grow in Love Programme. Such links provide information for teachers on festivals and celebrations from other religions. This provides an opportunity to include pupil/s from other religious traditions or life stance in our school.

Spiritual Awareness/In-service

A prayer and/or reflection is included at Board of Management meetings. Teachers attend in-service on the Grow in Love Programme, when available.

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Teaching Methodologies Used to Achieve Aims

- Grow In Love Teacher's Guide
- Interactive learning
- Giving children prayer experiences that are meaningful
- Sacramental and non-sacramental liturgies
- Use of imagination in prayer
- Drama and role play on the theme of Christian Values
- Questions and answers helping children use their own words
- Vocal prayer

Success Criteria

We will know this policy is working in our school if:

- There is an acknowledged sense of God, Faith, Prayer and Workshop within the school community.
- There is an ordered community where respect for all is evident at all times.
- There is an outward-looking care for the less fortunate in society.
- There is evidence of parental interest in the religious education programme.
- There are recognisable links between parish/home/school
- Children can speak confidently of their faith.

Responsibility for implementing this Policy

The Board of Management, in consultation with the principal and staff, is responsible for facilitating the smooth implementation of the policy.

The teachers teach the programme appropriate to their class. All members of staff and all within the school community are expected to actively support the spirit of the school.

Teachers and Staff

- Inform themselves through studying the Grow In Love teacher's manual and Catholic Preschool & Primary Religion Curriculum for Ireland
- Deliver and teach the Grow In Love programme appropriate to their class
- Co-operate with the Chaplain/Parish and Diocesan Advisers
- Avail of in-service support provided
- Actively support the spirit and ethos of the school

Parents

- Co-operate and support the school in its effort, especially at times of sacramental preparation and at other school events to which they are invited.
- Support the pupils by engaging with the home/school links that are an intrinsic part of the "Grow in Love" programme at all class levels

Principal

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- Takes an active role in encouraging the whole school aspects of the programme and monitors progress throughout the school.
- Liaises with the school chaplain in defining the role of the chaplaincy and the parish in the life of the school.
- Helps to facilitate supportive interaction of all parties in implementing the programme.

Implementation

This policy will be implemented as soon as it is approved by the Board of Management.

Evaluation/Review

It will be evaluated and reviewed on a regular basis.

Approval and Communication

The policy was approved by the Board of Management. It is available for perusal by parents.

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management on 04.03.24

Doreann Uí Bhungáin