

Religious Education Policy

Introductory Statement

The policy was formulated collaboratively by staff, students, parents and the Board of Management of St Gabriel's Primary School.

Mission Statement

"St. Gabriel's is a Catholic school where the school community endeavors to educate children in a Christian atmosphere and encourages them to develop to their full potential."

Our school plan is underpinned by its Catholic Ethos. Our aim is to provide a safe, happy learning environment where children's emotional, psychological, physical and moral development is catered for in addition to their academic progress. The school promotes and expects from its pupils, a tolerance of different religious beliefs, and of those with no religious beliefs.

Aim of Religious Education Policy

The aim of Religious Education is to foster and deepen the children's faith. People of faith perceive themselves and their word in a special way. Faith is active. As people of faith we are aware of God as a presence in our lives. We see things in relation to God. This awareness calls for a response. Our lives become a response to a compassionate and loving God. Faith is our response to God's self-communication to us through revelation. God's initiative is a gift, an invitation. The response we make is our choice, our decision. It is a response that no one can make on behalf of another; neither can it be forced from anyone. What is possible, however, is the creation of a context wherein people have the opportunity to become aware of God's invitation, to hear God's word and to explore how best they can respond in their own lives.

General Information

Diocese: Dublin

Archbishop: Most Reverend Dermot Farrell

Parish: Assumption Parish

Parish Priest & School Chaplin: Fr. Adrian Egan

Board of Management Patron nominees: Ms. Patricia Slavin, Fr. Adrian Egan

Materials

The Grow in Love programme is used in all classes. Full kits, including posters are available to each class teacher. Each child has a copy of the appropriate textbook and workbook. Each class has a copy of an age-appropriate, approved Bible. A full class set is available for sharing. These are stored in the general resource area behind the office. Supplementary material received from sources such as the Diocesan Advisors Office are notified to teachers or circulated via Aladdin and email. Additional Religious Education resources are stored in

the general resource area, and teachers may use these on a needs basis. Teachers are asked to 'sign out' resources when they are borrowed and let the R.E. representative know of any loss or damages.

Parent school partnership

Parents' information sheets for the relevant programme are sent home by the class teacher. Homework is set as appropriate and parents are asked to talk to their children/support. Information is given to parents at meetings for new parents and our annual class meetings. Meetings for parents of children receiving the sacraments are organised by the Chaplin. Parents are encouraged to attend the "In Memory of Me" and "Family" masses.

Symbols

There is a Crucifix in each classroom and welcome area. A statue of Our Lady and or other saints or photographs of saints are displayed in classrooms and throughout the school.

Sacred Space

Provision is made for a Sacred Space in each classroom. It is recommended that this change in accordance with the Liturgical Year. It may also reflect the current theme/topic or work in the Religious Education programme.

Doctrine

The 'Questions & Answers to be Learned' section of the Grow in Love Programme is to be memorised by the children and relevant prayers learned.

Sacramental Preparation

Sacramental preparation will take place in accordance with diocesan policy including "First Communion and First Reconciliation: Diocesan Policy."

a) First Reconciliation

- Children in 2nd class are prepared for the Sacrament of Penance each year. The book, Grow in Love 4 is used by the teachers for the programme of religious education for the Sacrament of Penance.
- The First Reconciliation ceremonies are organised by the priest(s) and the children are prepared by the teachers, in collaboration with parents/ guardians.
- First reconciliation usually takes place shortly before the Communion ceremony and is conducted in the church. Parents/ guardians are invited to attend with their children.

b) First Communion

- Children in 2nd class are prepared for the Sacrament of Communion each year. The book Grow in Love 4 is used by the teachers as a guide to the programme of Religious Education for Communion.

- Communion ceremonies are prepared and organised by the teachers in collaboration with the priest(s) and parents/ guardians.
- The school chaplain endeavours to call to the class as frequently as possible.
- Parents/ guardians are encouraged to become involved in the formal religious education of their children through the Parish based 'In Memory of Me' programme.
- Teachers of 2nd class are encouraged to bring the children to 10am mass in the local church as frequently as possible.
- Art work is displayed on the day in the church, representing the work covered by the children in preparation for the sacrament.

c) Confirmation

- Children in 6th class are prepared each year for the Sacrament of Confirmation. The Grow in Love programme is used by the teachers as a guide to the programme of Religious Education for Confirmation.
- The school chaplain endeavours to call to the class as frequently as possible.
- Teachers of 6th class are encouraged to bring the class to 10am mass in the local church as frequently as possible.
- Parents/guardians are invited to be part of the 'Enrolment Ceremony' early in the school year.
- Parents/ guardians are encouraged to become involved in the formal religious education of their children.
- The children will be invited to take their pledge to 'Abstain from Alcohol and illegal drugs' prior to the Confirmation ceremony. This usually takes place during the Service of Light.
- Confirmation ceremonies are prepared and organised by the teachers and Fr. Adrian in collaboration with parents/ guardians, and the other schools on the campus.
- Art work is displayed on the day in the church, representing the work covered by the children in preparation for the sacrament.
- The Confirmation class attends a retreat following their confirmation. This may take place in the local 'Faith Centre' or an appropriate location outside the Parish.
- Children participate in the 'Faith Friends' programme when available through local Secondary Schools.

Implementation of Religious Education throughout the School Year

Religion is taught for 30 minutes daily. The start time on each day varies due to the difficulty around time-tabling. This does not include time spent on daily prayers. Prayers are also said daily at the start and end of the school day and at lunch time.

- Mass: We attend mass as a whole school at the beginning/end of each school year. All classes are encouraged to attend independently each month and classes preparing for sacraments attend more frequently.
- Feast days are highlighted throughout the school year in a number of different ways including displays, attendance at Mass, special prayers at assembly, visits from our school Chaplin and the Grow in Love programme.
- Where a newly qualified teacher is teaching sacramental classes s/he will link up with the staff Religious Education representative. In other cases, the teachers will link with the Principal and/or previous teachers of sacramental classes, as the need arises.
- Missionary awareness and charity work is an important part of our school ethos. All children are encouraged to take part annually in the Trócaire appeal and at least one class yearly will engage with a charitable Christmas activity. Each year 6th class or the Student Council will also pick a charity and fund raising is carried out for that charity.
- Information for teachers from the Diocesan office is forwarded via the school intranet or emails. Where appropriate e.g. Diocesan Mass, Corpus Christi procession, information is also shared with parents through the school monthly newsletter. Where necessary letters will be sent home for a specific reason.
- Our school Chaplin and the parish pastoral workers are welcome in our school at any time. The Chaplin endeavours to call weekly. Sacramental classes are prioritised and others are included as often as possible.
- Advent: An Advent wreath is displayed in the main entrance area. Classes take it in turns to light the candles and all are encouraged to pray there and reflect on the meaning of Advent
- Hymns: In order to build up a repertoire of hymns for Mass & Assembly specific hymns are targeted each year to be taught to all children.
- Assembly: Hymns, prayer, the liturgical year and our school mission statement play an integral part in our school assemblies.

Other relevant policies

Child Safeguarding Statement, School Admission Policy, Data Protection policy.

Ratification and review: This policy was ratified by the Board of Management on April 8th 2024 and will be reviewed as necessary and at least within a four-year period. The Catholic Schools Partnership document “A process for understanding, supporting and taking ownership of the characteristic spirit in a Catholic school” is used in conjunction with other relevant material.

Signed:

Date: 08/04/2024

Chairperson of Board of Management