

Réalt na Mara National School



RELIGIOUS EDUCATION POLICY

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SCOPE OF THE POLICY

As a Catholic school this Religious Education Policy will impact on the whole school community. Support for the implementation of the policy will come from several groups.

Board of Management

Approves the policy and ensures its implementation and monitors its review.

School Staff

Supports the procedures of the policy and ensures its effective implementation. The staff also embraces and safeguards the Ethos of the school and supports the cross culture of religious education. Our Classroom Teachers implement and review the policy to ensure a high standard and effective delivery of religious education.

Sacramental Chaplain

Assists with the implementation of the policy and supports the staff.

Parent(s)/Guardian(s)

Supports the Ethos of the school and the religious education programme and facilitates the faith formation of their children.

Children

Participates in the religious education programme and related activities.

VISION STATEMENT

Réalt na Mara National School is a Catholic school under the patronage of the Bishop of Waterford and Lismore.

A Catholic school is a living expression of a long and varied tradition of education inspired by the life of Christ as lived in the Church. Such a school emphasises the dignity of the human person as a child of God called to work with other persons in creating an inclusive community in service of the common good; where knowledge is sought and respected while faith is nurtured and challenged.

Réalt na Mara National School is situated in a village or by now a small-town setting serving a diverse population. One of the great strengths of the school is its social inclusion. The presence of children from diverse backgrounds enriches the life of the school community.

MISSION STATEMENT

In our school, we celebrate each child's unique personality, intelligence and ability. We seek to develop our pupils' full academic potential to prepare them for further education and life-long learning. We aim to nurture each pupil in all dimensions of their life-spiritual, moral, emotional, imaginative, artistic, social and physical development.

Our school is an integral part of the parish and in partnership with parents and the Church we aim to nurture the Catholic faith through religious education, preparation for the sacraments and through our school ethos.

As a Christian community we aim to provide a safe and welcoming environment that is respectful of diversity in race, culture, religion, gender and ability. We promote equality and support pupils with special educational needs. An atmosphere of kindness, respect and care for all members of our school community is fostered by modelling the behaviour expected in order to create a safe, co-operative and productive environment for learning.

We strive to empower and utilise parents to be actively involved in their child's education and in the life of our school.

We value our relationship with our local community and actively promote our pupils' and their families' involvement in their community.

We promote team spirit and co-operation between all partners in education: teachers, pupils, parents, school management, ancillary staff and the wider community.

Nature of Religious Education

As a Catholic school, religious education is a core subject on the school curriculum and an integral part of the ethos of the school. Religious education is provided for children in accordance with the doctrines, practices and traditions of the Catholic Church that derives its trust and ultimate foundation from the person of Christ. Such education has nothing in common with indoctrination that amounts to teaching a child a religious way of behaving and believing. This type of teaching deliberately harms children by undermining their natural ability to reason. In contrast, Réalt na Mara National school is committed to the deepest respect for both faith and reason as they contribute significantly to the formation of rational and mature citizens of democratic society.

Three types of learning in religious education are evident in Réalt na Mara National school.

1. ‘Learning into religion’

Children are provided with religious instruction and experience, such as prayer and sacramental participation that will help them to grow into their faith and in their understanding of the Catholic tradition.

2. ‘Learning about religion’

While particular focus is given to Christianity, children are exposed to a broad range of religious traditions and to the non-religious interpretation of life. Such a broad exposure seeks to develop in pupils, powers of tolerance and mutual understanding and the skills needed to engage in meaningful dialogue with those of other, or of no religious traditions.

3. ‘Learning from religion’

Children evaluate both *what* has been learned and *how* it impacts on their daily lives. Children are invited to learn from what they are discovering.

Religious education in Réalt na Mara NS is open to, and inclusive of, all children, regardless of their faith background and these children are invited to participate in and engage with the religious education programme in various ways.

Aims of Religious Education

In Réalt na Mara National School religious education endeavours to:

- Develop in children a knowledge and understanding of their own religious tradition and beliefs, with respect for religious traditions and beliefs of others.
- Help children grow in their identity as persons created in the image and likeness of God.
- Help children respond to God's love through love: by showing love for themselves, for each other, for God and all of Creation.
- Deepen in children an understanding of what it means to be a disciple of Jesus and how to participate in the mission of the Church.
- Foster awareness in children of shared values such as justice, peace, the dignity of the human person.
- Heighten children's awareness, empathy and compassion for local needs/issues and global problems.
- Prepare children for the sacraments of First Penance, First Communion and Confirmation.
- Give children accurate, clear, age and ability appropriate information.
- Prepare children for living in community with people of their own and other faith traditions and none.

Rationale

The religious education policy allows each member of the staff to reflect on what it means to be a Catholic school and to articulate a commitment to it.

Curriculum

The Catholic characteristic ethos permeates the whole school day. Thirty minutes in each school day is devoted to religious education as well as time for prayer; *morning and night prayers, grace before and after meals* and other related religious activities.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION PROGRAMME - GROW IN LOVE

Junior & Senior Infants

The aim of the *Grow in Love* programme is: *to help children mature in relation to their spiritual, moral and religious lives, through their encounter with, exploration and celebration of the Catholic faith.*

Content of the programme

My family.

The Holy Family.

Our world.

Advent and Christmas.

Stories about Jesus.

Holy Week and Easter.

The Church.

Water/ Food.

Baptism.

We Give Thanks - The Mass.

Textbooks: *Grow in Love* Teacher's Manual. Children's Book.

First & Second Class

The aim of the *Grow in Love* programme is to help children to prepare for the Sacrament of Reconciliation and Holy Communion.

Content of the programme:

Called and chosen

Jesus

Sacraments: Baptism, Reconciliation, Eucharist

Advent & Christmas. Lent & Easter Pentecost

Third & Fourth Class

The Aim of the Grow in Love Programme is to continue to explore the richness of the sacrament and how people of faith down through the ages responded to God's call in their lives.

Content of the programme

God's plan

The Bible

Responding to God's call

Abraham & Moses

Ten Commandments

Jesus – Parables

Jesus the Healer and Teacher

Anointing of the Sick

Advent & Christmas Lent & Easter

Taking Care of the Earth

Building God's Kingdom

Fifth Class

The Aim of the Grow in Love programme is to remind the children that God knows and loves them unconditionally, the prophets are introduced, the diocesan and parish structures are examined. Conscience and confirmation are studied.

Content of the programme

The Bible

The Prophets

Parables

Beatitudes

Jesus Advent & Christmas Lent & Easter Pentecost

Conscience

Confirmation

Care of the earth

Sixth Class

The Aim of the Grow in Love programme to help children have an in depth understanding of God, Jesus, the Holy Spirit, Mary, prayer, sacraments, and morality.

Content of the programme

God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit.

Mary

The Church

Eternal Life

Other Religious traditions

Liturgical Year

Sacraments

Sacred Scripture Liturgy and prayer

Morality

Homework Policy

The school holds a strong belief that families should be given the opportunity to be involved in their children's religious education, therefore, homework is sent home one night, per week.

Facilities and Resources

- Classroom teachers
- Parents
- Local Community Groups
- Local clergy
- Sacred Space
- Textbook
- Interactive White Boards
- Religious education notice board
- Religious education shelf in the staff resource room
- Audio Visual Equipment.

Withdrawal from Religious Education

Réalt na Mara National School respects and acknowledges the rights of parents/guardians who do not wish their son/daughter to participate in formal Religious Education Classes. If parents/guardians wish for their child to opt out of Religious Education, a request may be made to the principal in writing (See Appendix A Sample Letter).

Due to a lack of supervision resources, the school cannot provide alternative supervision for pupils when a request to 'opt out' from religious education is made. It is important that parents/guardians, who choose for their child to opt out, understand that it is not possible for children to be away from the classroom, and at times the church, while Religious Education or Sacramental Preparation is happening.

While there is no compulsion on a pupil to take part in Religious Education classes, parents/guardians are respectfully asked to ensure that their child acts in a way that does not compromise the rights of other children to engage in Religious Education and faith formation.

Children who do not participate in Religious Education may engage in a mindful task such as reading, drawing or colouring during these lessons.

Opportunities for Inclusion and Parental Choice

- Parents whose children are of other faiths or beliefs are made aware in advance of any religious events or celebrations.
- Children are always invited but not obliged to attend all Catholic religious celebrations in the school or in the local church. During these events, parents may collect their children and return them to school afterwards.
- Individual children, with parental consent, may wish to participate in these celebrations in some way, for example by reading appropriate prayers and texts, participating in art or drama, being part of the choir, playing an instrument etc.

Staff Support and Development

Effective religious education does not just happen spontaneously or accidentally. The very nature of the religious education class requires teachers to keep 'upgrading' and enhancing their teaching skills and resources.

Support and development for the staff are as follows:

- Management is supportive of all religious education in and out of the classroom.
- All religious education teachers are encouraged to attend an in-service of the new 'Grow in Love' programme.
- Magazines and articles relating to religion topics are circulated among the staff.
- Throughout the school year guest speakers talk to the staff on such topics as, Wellness, Mental Health, Bullying etc.
- As with all Subject Departments in the school a budget is provided to support teaching and learning in this area.

Outside support is received from the:

- Trustees of the school
- Board of Management
- Diocesan Advisor
- Diocesan Clergy

Liturgy

All staff are encouraged to participate in the Liturgical Life of the School.

To ensure that significant liturgical events are celebrated and recognised throughout the school year the following take place:

- Grandparents/My Special Person Mass
- Advent and Lenten Services of Reconciliation
- Ash Wednesday Service
- Carol Service
- Catholic Schools Week
- Morning Prayer reflective of the significance of the time of year. Feast days, Holy days
- Sixth Class Graduation Mass
- Celebrations associated with the school
- Staff Prayer and reflection.
- Whole school remembrance payer for the dead in November.

Sacred Space

There is a sacred space in the hallway of the Village Campus and in each classroom. These spaces are decorated to reflect the changing liturgical calendar and can contain quotations from Sacred Scripture and other writers, coloured fabric, and symbols.

Religious Imagery

Religious images and symbols are an integral part of the school. These images and symbols are placed in prominent areas around the school. The images and symbols include:

- A Crucifix in each classroom
- A Holy Water Font
- A Bible
- Statue of our Lady and the Sacred Heart
- Advent wreath
- A Crib
- Lenten, Holy Week and Easter displays
- Posters
- The Advent wreath, crib, Lenten, Holy Week and Easter display are accompanied with a brief explanation.

Outreach programmes

Peace and Justice is an integral part of the religious education programme. Children are encouraged to empathise and show compassion for local and global justice issues.

- Trócaire information and boxes during the season of Lent
- Class projects on local and global issues
- Carol singing in the local community, at the Christmas Tree for Remembrance Service for the RNLI
- Shoe Box Appeal
- Display Board with newspaper articles and pictures featuring local and global issues

Chaplaincy Services

The role of the sacramental chaplain, the Parish Priest, is to:

- Encourage School-Parish links.
- Be a support for the principal and staff.
- Encourage the implementation of the Liturgical Calendar.
- Get to know staff by visiting staffroom at morning tea or lunch time.
- Visit each classroom to meet the children and to chat with them about their religious education programme.
- Provide sacramental celebrations.

Parental Involvement

There is an opportunity for parents to be informed about the content of the religious education programme through:

- Enrolment meeting for Junior infants.
- Parent - Teacher Meetings.
- Sacramental Meetings.
- Weekly homework.

Parents are involved in the religious education programme through:

- Invitation to Grandparents/Special Person Mass
- Liturgical celebrations
- Catholic Schools Week activities
- Sixth Class Graduation Mass

Diocesan Support

The Diocesan Advisor visits the school each year either on a formal or informal basis.

The Diocesan Advisor provides:

- Encouragement through her opening school year letter to the staff and ‘thank you’ card at the end of the school year.
- Update on Diocesan and National events.
- Advice on policy and other related activities.
- Support by visiting the classroom and meeting the teachers and children and attending school celebrations.
- In-service on the new Religious Education programme ‘*Grow in Love*’.
- Support for the school when there is a critical event in the school.

Policy Monitoring and Time Frame

At the end of each school year, the staff meet to evaluate the success of the policy implementation.

The policy is reviewed every two years.

Success Criteria

The success of this school plan will be assessed based on the following criteria:

- Teachers’ preparation has been based on this plan.
- Procedures in this plan have been consistently followed.

Ratification and Communication

On ratification of this plan by the staff and Board of Management this plan will be communicated to all teachers through distribution and will become part of the School Plan. It will be available on request from the school office(s).

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management on 16th April 2024.

Signed: Michael White

Chairperson, Board of Management

Signed: Ciana McSheehy

Principal

Date: 16th April 2024

Date: 16th April 2024

Appendix A

Sample: Opt out of Religious Education Letter

Address,

Address,

Co. Waterford

Date

The Principal,
Réalt na Mara NS,
Dunmore East,
Co. Waterford.

Dear _____,

I/We wish for my/our child to opt out of Religious Education during their time in Réalt na Mara National School. I/We realise that Réalt na Mara National School is a Catholic school. I/We understand that there is no compulsion on our/my child to take part in the religious education classes in the school. I/ We understand that given the lack of supervision resources in the school my/our child will remain with the class, either in the classroom or in the church, during religion lessons and activities.

While I/ we do not wish our child to be taught the catholic faith I/ we respect the right of other children to do so and I/ we will ensure that our/my child behaves in a way that will not compromise this right.

Yours Sincerely,

Parent(s)/Guardian(s)