



*"Let the rooms be
full of happiness"*

*Scoil Íósaf National School,
Castlemartyr, Co. Cork.*

*Tel: (021) 4667689 Email: castlemartyrns@gmail.com
Roll No: 13647B*

Scoil Íósaf N.S. Religious Education Policy

Introduction:

Scoil Íósaf is a co-educational Catholic primary school under the patronage of the Bishop of Cloyne. The school models and promotes a philosophy inspired by belief in God and Catholic values.

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.ⁱ

The Vision for Religious Education in a Catholic School

The Catholic vision of education is rooted in its Christian concept of life centred on Jesus Christ; he is the One who ennobles people, gives meaning to human life, and is the model which the Catholic school offers to its pupilsⁱⁱ.

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

1) The educational dimension teaches the children the skills of spiritual, moral and religious literacy. This is founded on the formal curriculum which is taught through the Grow In Love programme.

2) The faith-formation dimension helps form the children's characters in the values of Jesus Christ. It nurtures and supports their faith development. They begin to experience a sense of belonging to a Faith Community.ⁱⁱⁱ

An important part of this vision is our response to religious and cultural change in our society. In Scoil Íósaf all are respected and valued. This includes the many different levels of faith that we will encounter in both our staff and pupils, and those pupils who are of other faiths and no faith.

The Aims of the Religious Education Policy

The purpose of this Religious Education Policy is:

- To provide greater clarity in respect of aims, procedures, understanding and delivery of Religious Education.
- 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.^{iv}
- To assist teaching staff in the teaching of Religion.
- To help class teachers in their approach to the different levels of faith-commitment and knowledge which they encounter in their classrooms.
- To consider strategies that respond to the needs of children of different faiths and no faith in terms of Religious Education.

The Religious Education Policy provides the mechanism whereby the values expressed in the Mission and Ethos Statements are implemented. In a structured way, these statements help and support all in the school to actively engage with the values. These values are expressed in attitudes, behaviour, belief, practice, teaching and decision-making within the school.

About Our Catholic School

Scoil Íósaf is a Catholic school under the patronage of the Bishop of Cloyne, Most Rev. William Crean. Our school is in the parish of Imogeela (Castlemartyr). The Parish Priest is V. Rev. Frank O' Neill.

Our Catholic School Environment

Visitors, parents and children know that we are a Catholic School:

- The Schedule for the Catholic School is available to visitors, parents and staff of the school.
- The school's Mission Statement is prominently displayed.
- There are religious symbols and visible signs of our Catholic faith in public areas of our school.
- There is a Prayer Space that reflects the liturgical seasons in classrooms.
- There is ongoing communication with the local priests. Visits are scheduled throughout the school year.
- School Prayer Services may take place to mark Church Feasts.

Prayer in Our School

- There is time for prayer in every classroom - at the beginning and end of day, before and after lunch, school prayer over the intercom on occasion.
- Children are taught their prayers in accordance with the Grow in Love series.
- Children learn Mass responses in accordance to the Grow in Love series and in preparation for the sacraments.
- Important Feast Days are celebrated throughout the Church Year.
- Children have the opportunity to experience different forms of prayer eg. Guided meditation, spontaneous prayer, reflection on a Gospel story.
- Communal prayer time and liturgical celebrations may be timetabled during the school year e.g Christmas Prayer Service, Lenten Celebrations, Catholic Schools Week, Graduation Mass.

Classroom Environment

- There is a Prayer Space in each classroom. It reflects the Liturgical Seasons.
- Every Prayer Space has a Catholic Bible and faith symbols.

Classroom Teaching

- All teachers have a recognised qualification in Religious Education (The Certificate in Religious Studies).
- The school day is punctuated by prayer eg. morning and evening prayer, prayer before and after lunch.
- The following textbooks/workbooks are in use in the our school:
 - Junior / Senior Infants - Grow in Love 1 & 2
 - First/ Second Class - Grow in Love 3 & 4
 - Third/ Fourth Class - Grow in Love 5 & 6
 - Fifth / Sixth Class - Grow in Love 7 & 8
- The Grow in Love series aims to help children to see how they can respond to God's love through love: by doing acts of love that mirror the actions of Jesus.

Sacramental Preparation and Celebration

- The sacraments of First Penance and First Holy Communion take place in 2nd class.
- The sacrament of Confirmation takes place in 6th class.
- 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 preparations for First Holy Communion and Confirmation, such as *Do this in Memory of Me* and *You Shall be my Witness*.
- In preparation for the sacraments the children learn and memorise relevant prayers and Mass responses.
- The sacraments of First Penance, First Holy Communion and Confirmation take place in the local church. Families are invited to celebrate in the sacraments with their children.

Pupils of Different Faiths and Traditions

Scoil Iósaf is a welcoming, open and inclusive school. Children of all faith and no faith are welcome. We continuously strive for best practice concerning the inclusion of pupils in our school.

- Our Admissions Policy clearly states that Scoil Iósaf is a Catholic School.
- The Admissions Policy makes clear that we welcome diversity and inclusion. We believe that the presence of children from diverse backgrounds enriches our school community.
- It is clear to parents/guardians enrolling their children that the Catholic ethos of our school is not confined to religion lessons only, but permeates the whole school day.
- During moments of prayer, it is made clear that for children of others faiths and no faith that these can be times of personal reflection.
- The class teacher and pupils will show interest in any pupil marking a special feast in his/her tradition while attending school. Children of different faiths are given the opportunity to explain their beliefs to others, if they so wish to.
- Children are always invited but not obliged to attend all Catholic religious celebrations in the school. Individual children, with parental consent, may wish to participate in these celebrations by participating in art or drama, being part of a choir, playing an instrument etc.
- If parent(s)/ guardian(s) wish to have their child opt out of formal Religious Education the school offers that the pupil can stay in the classroom and engage in an educationally appropriate activity. Please let the school know if this is your preference.
- On evenings where Religious Education is assigned for homework. The children whose parent(s)/ guardian(s) wish to have them opt out of Religious Education may be assigned an alternative educationally appropriate activity.
- On occasion classes may attend the local church for a visit, sacramental preparation or Mass. The children whose parent(s)/ guardian(s) wish to have them opt out of Religious Education will remain in school in a different class for the duration of the church visit. They will be assigned an educationally appropriate activity.

Parish Link

- The school may plan a number of liturgical celebrations throughout the year eg, a Carol Service, Catholic Schools Week, Ash Wednesday and Graduation etc.
- The school and parish priest plan for Sacramental celebrations – First Penance, First Holy Communion and Confirmation.

Home Link

The school encourages parental involvement in the following ways:

- Religious Education is included in end of year reports.
- Parents/guardians are encouraged to pray with their children at home.
- Parents/guardians are encouraged to engage with their child and the Grow in Love programme on evenings when Religious Education is assigned for homework.
- Attendance at Sacramental Preparation meetings is encouraged.
- Parents are invited to attend First Confession, Communion, Confirmation, Graduation Mass.
- All are encouraged to support Catholic Schools Week.

Success Criteria

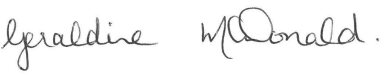
- An acknowledged sense of God, prayer and worship with the school community.
- Respect for the dignity of each person in the school community.
- Concern for the environment and creation.
- Active outreach to those in need.
- Evidence of mutually supportive partnership between school, parish and home.

Policy Monitoring

The Religious Education policy requires ongoing monitoring and regular evaluation to ensure successful implementation and to review whether any adjustments are necessary at any given time.

Ratification of Policy:

Ratified by Board of Management on 12th February 2026

Signed: 
(Chairperson, Board of Management)

Signed: 
(Principal, Secretary Board of Management)

- ⁱ Catholic Pre-School and Primary Religious Education Curriculum for Ireland p31
ⁱⁱ Catholic Pre-School and Primary Religious Education Curriculum for Ireland p12
ⁱⁱⁱ Religious Education Curriculum
^{iv} Catholic Pre-School and Primary Religious Education Curriculum for Ireland

Appendix

Liturgical Celebrations

This is a list of liturgical celebrations which may be celebrated in a given year.

- **October:** Missionary awareness is highlighted through the school's engagement with missionaries abroad.
- **November:** The Feast of the Holy Souls.
- **Advent and Christmas:** The Advent wreath marks the four weeks of preparation and waiting for the birth of Jesus. The crib takes central place in the school.
- **January:** Celebration of Catholic Schools Week.
- **February:** St. Brigid's day: The story of St. Brigid and the making of crosses.
- **Lent:** Ash Wednesday: the blessing of Ashes.
- **March:** Feast of St. Patrick. Children learn about St. Patrick. Explanation of the symbolism of the Shamrock.
- **Holy Week:** The children learn about the events of Holy Thursday and Good Friday.
- **Easter:** The Easter story - the Resurrection of Jesus.
- **May:** The school celebrates Mary, the mother of Jesus, by saying the rosary and singing hymns.
- **Pentecost:** The story of Pentecost. Symbols of the Holy Spirit- a link is made with Confirmation.
- **June:** Graduation Prayer Service

