

Policy on Religious Education and Faith Development.

Preamble (incorporating introductory statement, rationale and relationship to characteristic spirit of the school).

In this document the Board of Management sets out the policy of the school regarding Faith Development and Religious Education in accordance with the founding intention of Edmund Rice.

School Mission Statement.

S.S. Peter & Paul's C.B.S. is a Catholic school committed to the mission of nurturing the whole child – Spirit, mind and body. It seeks to welcome and accommodate the beliefs and customs of children of other faiths and cultures.

The staff of the school aims to ensure that the boys graduate from the school with a healthy sense of confidence and a willingness to face the future with self discipline and a deep respect for themselves, other and the environment.

Parents are acknowledged as their children's primary educators and, as such, are encouraged and facilitated to work together with teachers for the benefit of their children

Each pupil is encouraged to develop all his talents – academic, creative, spiritual and physical. The school endeavours to value all children equally in accordance with the values of the Gospel.

Relationship to School's Mission Statement.

Reflecting the founding intention, The Board of Management has ratified the following mission statement, drawn up collaboratively with the staff and the parents' council:

The ethos of the school is embodied in the pursuit of excellence in the sacred and the secular.

Religious Education.

Religious Education in a Catholic school has two main dimensions:

Religious knowledge and **Faith development.**

The children are led to **know about God** and to **know God.**

Any universally acknowledged religion is generally accepted to have six elements: its founding story, doctrines, rituals, morality, community aspect and an experiential element.

In our school life these translate into the main aims of the programme as follows:

Aims.

The programme aims to encourage:

- belief in God in the person of Jesus as portrayed in Scripture.
- an understanding of doctrine.
- the practice of prayer and worship.
- moral growth.
- the development of community spirit; (which implies caring for the other, recognising the uniqueness and dignity of each person, the sacredness of life, our welcoming of the stranger, etc.)
- the experience of God through prayer, through the recognition of the world as God's creation and through the circumstances of daily life.

Faith Development.

We carefully plan for the development of the inner life of the child through creativity, imagination, an appreciation of the beautiful, and a sense of wonder.

The inner growth lays the basis for helping children with:

faith in their ability to develop a personal relationship God;
faith in the doctrines of the Catholic Church in which they have been baptised,
and an awareness of the mysteries of faith;
the development of a personal prayer life, and an understanding of the importance of communal worship.

This growth in understanding and faith informs their willingness to share, to make sacrifices for others and to act in morally appropriate ways.

Content of the Policy – The Programme

The Board of Management and the teachers have adopted the Alive-O Catechetical Programme approved and recommended by the Irish Hierarchy for use in Catholic Schools.

The programme distils our aims in an age-appropriate progression through the school. There are eight separate programmes presented in a child's book and a teacher's manual for the classes from Junior Infants to Sixth class.

The programme incorporates the recommended approach to religious education for the reception of the sacraments of Penance, Holy Communion and Confirmation, which is undertaken by the school in close co-operation with parents and parish. The programme is studied each day for one half-hour. A Catholic ethos, however, permeates the school day and the life of the school.

Whole School Dimension of Religious Education Programme

As well as the programme, which is taught in each class, there are many aspects of religion, which are undertaken by the whole school together.

The Management and Staff, and sometimes the children, decide on appropriate and meaningful icons, pictures and statues to display through the school building. These speak of people, events and ideas with which children can identify or through which they can be led to some new understanding of God.

Prayer and Worship

The school community is given the opportunity to share prayerful reflection and a sense of awe and wonder at the presence of God in daily life.

The major Catholic and local feasts are celebrated in this spirit. They are also marked with the aid of signs and symbols displayed in a public and prominent place throughout the school and/or in a dedicated *sacred space*, e.g.:

- Advent – the Advent wreath and Jesse tree,
- Christmas – tree and crib,
- Feast of St. Brigid – traditional crosses,
- Feast of St. Patrick – depiction of story and shamrock
- Lent – symbols of repentance and ashes
- Easter – symbols of the new life of resurrection, the empty tomb
- Pentecost – artistic depiction of the coming of the Holy Spirit.

Liturgical and paraliturgical celebrations are held in common on some occasions e.g.

- the opening and closing of the school year
- some of the above feasts
- the patronal feast of the school
- carol service at Christmas
- blessing of Ashes
- times of trauma or crisis
- and for other occasions which from time to time are considered appropriate to celebrate or to mark.

The pupils of the school may be invited to join at the celebration of the first reception of the sacraments by other children of the school and at other liturgical celebrations organized by the parish.

Community Building

We try to ensure that all children feel safe and welcome within the school community and feel that they belong; we also aim to ensure that all children understand that each one has the same right to have her opinions heard as any other.

A sense of togetherness and solidarity among the school community is fostered through, e.g. assemblies being held by Principal or organised by other teachers, sports day, school concerts, celebrating achievements of the pupils, celebrating diversity.

Collaboration.

The Catholic education offered here informs and permeates the whole atmosphere and ethos of the school.

It is conducted in collaboration with the children's parents and the local parish. In all matters pertaining to the education of children and especially in religious education we acknowledge the primacy of the place held in this process by the parents or guardians of the children. We see our role as being supportive of role of parents and parish.

Prayer Room.

The school has its own Prayer Room where class liturgies are celebrated from time to time. The Prayer Room also acts as an ideal place where members of the school community are invited to spend some quiet time with the Lord.

Spiritual Formation of Teachers.

The spiritual affirmation of teachers is understood by the Board of Management to be an integral part of the religious education programme undertaken by the school. To this end the following may be occasionally undertaken:

- Days/seminars for reflection, In-service in the area of handing on the faith

The Board of Management is committed to funding such events.

Relationship to Admissions Policy.

Subject to the terms of the admission policy children of any faith or of no faith are welcome to this school. Each child is welcome to attend and benefit from the Catholic religious education programme. However, if parents have difficulty with this the Principal shall meet with them to see if an accommodation can be reached. The school cannot, however, undertake to educate children of other faiths in their own faith, nor can it provide supervision during the religious education period apart from in class.

Methodologies used to achieve aims.

- Study of the Teachers' Guide.
- Interactive learning.
- Giving the children prayer experiences that are meaningful.
- Sacramental and non-sacramental liturgies.
- Use of imagination in prayer.
- Questions and answers helping children to use their own words.
- Vocal prayer.

Success Criteria for the Programme.

- There is an acknowledged sense of God, Faith, Prayer and Worship within the school community
- There is an warm caring community where respect for all is evident at all times
- There is an outward-looking care for the less fortunate in society

- Increase in parental interest in religious education programmes is evident
- 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 teachers along with the local clergy and the Diocesan Advisor Sr. Antoinette Dilworth are 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 and ethos of the school.

Roles within the general responsibility.

Board of Management.

- Initiates, approves and resources the policy.
- Includes in a Post of Responsibility duties relating to Religious Education and Faith development.
- Clearly understands and supports the role of the Chaplain/Parish.

Teachers.

- Inform themselves through studying the Teachers' Manual.
- Deliver the Programme
- Cooperation with the chaplain/Parish and the diocesan Advisers.
- Avail themselves of in-service support provided.

Parents.

Co-operate and support the school in its efforts, especially at times of sacramental preparation and at other school events to which they are invited. They are also asked to help with religious education homework and to read the parts of the Alive-O Programme that are intended for them. The role of parents is paramount.

Principal.

- take an active role in encouraging the whole school aspects of the programme and monitors progress throughout the school
- The principal may occasionally time-table religious education and faith development as a topic for staff and board meetings.
- Liaises with the school chaplain in defining the role of the chaplaincy and the parish in the life of the school in consultation with the Post Holder.
- Help to facilitate supportive interaction of all parties in implementing the programme.

Timeframe for Implementation.

This policy has been implemented following approval by the Board of Management at a meeting held on _____

Timeframe for Evaluation/Review.

It will be evaluated and reviewed one year after implantation and hereafter on a regular basis.

Responsibility for Review.

The Board of Management/Principal/Post Holder will initiate the review of the policy.

Approval and Communication.

- The policy is approved by the Board of Management and forwarded to the Trustees
- It is available for perusal by all parents.