

March 2018

# Religious Education Policy

Scoil Náisiúnta na mBuachaillí



**“The mission of schools is to develop a sense of truth, of what is good and beautiful. And this occurs through a rich path made up of many ingredients.”**

Pope Francis

**GENERAL INFORMATION**

Diocese	Cashel & Emily
Patron	Archbishop Kieran O' Reilly
Education Office	St. Senans
Parish	Newport
Priests	Fr. John O' Keefe Fr. Joe Delaney

**Introduction:**

Scoil Náisiúnta na mBuachaillí is a catholic school under the patronage of the Catholic Archbishop of Cashel and Emily, Keiran O' Reilly. The school models and promotes a philosophy inspired by belief in God and traditional Catholic values. We promote religious education for the pupils in accordance with the doctrines, practices and ethos of the Catholic Church.

**AIM OF THE RELIGIOUS EDUCATION POLICY**

- To foster and deepen the Faith of the children in Scoil Náisiúnta na mBuachaillí and to develop this active Faith
- To enable the children in Scoil Náisiúnta na mBuachaillí to be aware of the wonder and presence of God around them and to respond to this awareness.
- To enable a sense of God, Worship and Prayer within the school community.
- To help parents towards a deeper understanding of Religious Education and the Sacraments.
- To develop a respect for all in the whole school community.

**SCHOOL MISSION STATEMENT**

"We aim to create a school where each child achieves his full potential as a well-rounded responsible member of society through encouragement and example; where training of the child includes the spiritual, intellectual, moral, physical and social aspects of human development; and where a love of learning and an appreciation of life and the world is engrained."

**MATERIALS**

The '*Grown in Love Programme*' (2<sup>nd</sup> – 4<sup>th</sup>) and the '*Alive-O Programme*' (5<sup>th</sup> & 6<sup>th</sup>) are the primary resources to assist the teachers in their planning for religious education. Each class is equipped with a kit containing:

- teacher's manual,

- DVD
- CD
- Laminated posters.
- On-line resource materials

Each child has access the *Alive-O* textbook together with a religion copy.

Each class also has a Sacred Space Box and a set of Mass response cards.

These materials are monitored and maintained by the Principal.

Emails, from the Association of Catholic Teachers (ACT) and the Diocesan Education Office containing additional resources, are forwarded by internal mail to each class teacher monthly.

Advent, Catholic Schools Week and Lenten resources are also distributed, at the appropriate time, to assist with planning of lessons and sharing of resources.

## **SYMBOLS and SACRED SPACE**

A crucifix and a statue of Our Lady are placed in the corridor. The class teachers all have their own symbols in their rooms. Each classroom also has its own Sacred Space, which changes according to the Liturgical Year.

## **DOCTRINE**

Each teacher has a copy of the in-service 2007/2008 booklet (updated 2013 version is in 'Shared Documents Folder' on the internal G drive under 'Religion'). This booklet, among other publications, guides staff on the doctrine which the children are expected to memorise.

Both the traditional and modern formats of The Ten Commandments are used in our school. Teachers have found that the modern format is easier for the children, in particular those who have learning difficulties, to memorise.

## **SACRAMENTAL PREPARATION**

During their time in Scoil Náisiúnta na mBuachaillí the children are prepared for the Sacraments in conjunction with the Parish Priest and the parish team.

Involvement in the preparation of Catholic children for the Sacraments of first reconciliation, first Communion and Confirmation is an integral part of the life of a Catholic primary school.

First reconciliation and first Communion are celebrated during second class and Confirmation normally takes place in sixth class. Over the course of the school year, 2.5 hours are devoted to religious education each week. This average is also maintained during second class and sixth class. Scoil Náisiúnta na mBuachaillí takes care to ensure that this

amount of time is not exceeded. The time allocated to religious education is sufficient to cover sacramental preparation.

Scoil Naisiunta na mBuachaillí adopts Parish programmes such as *Do This in Memory* and *You Shall Be My Witnesses* which have significantly improved the level of parish input into the preparation for the sacraments, while also encouraging parents/guardians to prepare their children appropriately in their own homes. Such preparation is not an either/or in school or outside, but can be both and it should not lead to any diminishment of the valuable work being achieved in school time.

Parents are encouraged to actively participate in and guide their children on their faith journey through the Grow in Love and Alive-O Programmes Home links.

The children and their families are encouraged to attend a number of masses/celebrations during the year to assist with their preparation for the sacrament.

A meeting for the parents of children preparing for Communion and Confirmation is normally held at the beginning of the school year where they are informed about the sacrament, special masses etc. Teachers ensure that sacramental preparation is an ongoing process from Second to Sixth Class by following the Grow in Love and Alive-O programmes.

Pupils from Scoil Náisiúnta wear normal clothes at the celebration of Communion and Confirmation.

## IMPLEMENTATION OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION AND SUPPORTS THROUGHOUT THE SCHOOL YEAR

As a Catholic school, Religious Education and Catholic ethos permeate all areas of the curriculum, especially SPHE, SESE, Art, Music, Drama and literacy both English and Gaeilge.

The teachers choose the formal prayers, which are recited during the school day, from the list of prayers for their class group detailed in the *Grow in Love* and *Alive-O* programmes.

As Scoil Náisiúnta na mBuachaillí is a senior primary school, it is noted that the children have been taught the ritual format of the Mass in Second Class as part of their preparation for Sacrament of the Eucharist.

To assist with and reinforce this learning, the Board of Management has provided each class with a set of Mass response cards. Classes are encouraged to revise these responses during the school year. This enables the children to respond better when attending school and parish masses throughout the school year and beyond.

A 'beginning of year mass' takes place in the Church of the Holy Redeemer Newport on the first Friday in October. Our Parish Priest Fr. John O'Keeffe officiates at this Mass. Pupils from 2<sup>nd</sup> & 6<sup>th</sup> classes are given jobs at this mass.

6<sup>th</sup> class pupils have an end of year mass which is celebrated at their Graduation in June.

The major Catholic feasts are celebrated. They are marked with the aid of signs and symbols displayed in the school and integrated into the curriculum.

Examples of such celebrations include:

1. **Advent** – The Advent wreath is displayed in the welcome area.
2. **Christmas** – A *Christmas Tree* and *Crib* are displayed and there is a *Carol Service* outside the church. We also hold a Christmas Concert which includes a nativity play, music, carols and explanations of some of the different traditions associated with Christmas. Children/Parents of other and no faiths are invited to join in this celebration.
3. **St Brigid's Day** – Traditional crosses are made by some classes and the story of St Brigid is studied.
4. **St. Patrick's Day** – We have an assembly where there is song singing both in English and as Gaeilge and the story of St. Patrick is told. Music, dance and art are part of this feast day celebration also.
5. An **Ash Wednesday Service** is held in the church where ashes are distributed and the school community reflect on preparing for Easter.
6. During **Catholics Schools' Week** particular lessons are taught based on the theme.
7. **Assembly** - Class group assemblies begin with prayers and a quiet reflection time where attention is drawn to the relevant Feast Days.

There is peer and parish support for teachers of sacramental classes. The parish team facilitates a gathering for teachers of sacramental classes to meet with other teachers from other parish schools to reflect on the sacrament and in particular the role of the teacher within the preparation process. It also affords the teachers to reflect on their own experience of the Sacraments.

Fr. John and Fr. Delaney visit the school regularly. Such visits are informal in nature.

Scoil Náisiúnta na mBuachaillí staff and children support a number of charities as a means of encouraging the children to give tangible expression to the 'value-system' that underpins the ethos of our school. Charities include:

- MS Ireland
- Milford Hospice
- Simon Community
- Trocaire
- Team Evan Jones

## PARTNERS IN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

### Home/School

Grow in Love and Alive-O books are sent home regularly and the home/school link pages are available on the school website [www.newportboysnationalschool.ie](http://www.newportboysnationalschool.ie)

The parents of all children are invited to the school Mass, Carol Service, Ash Wednesday Service and are involved through the Grow in Love and Alive-O Programmes in the preparation of their children for Communion and Confirmation.

### **School/Parish**

The parish team, parents and teachers organise the preparation masses in Scoil Náisiúnta na mBuachaillí. Once a month the team engage with the pupils in the classroom. Following this there is a Sunday Mass based on the theme covered in class and the pupils participate in this celebration.

### **PUPILS OF OTHER RELIGIOUS TRADITIONS**

It is clearly recognised and acknowledged that parents are the primary educators of their children. In accordance with Rules 54 and 69 Rules for National Schools (1965), religious education is provided in Scoil Náisiúnta na mBuachaillí for 30 minutes daily.

While Scoil Náisiúnta na mBuachaillí has some non-Catholic population, every reasonable effort is made to accommodate requests from parents/guardians to have their child excluded from participation in religious instruction.

Where parents/guardians raise issues of concern in regard to the content of the religious education policy, an opportunity should be provided for them to meet individually with the principal or teacher. The purpose of this meeting is:

- a. to allay any concerns parents/guardians may have;
- b. to answer specific questions parents/guardians may have arising from either the information meeting or the programme content, as set out in the information document;
- c. to enable the parents/guardians to make an informed decision in regard to withdrawal from religious education or otherwise.

Scoil Náisiúnta na mBuachaillí provide the following options for children when a request for 'opt out' from religious education is made. These may include:

- a. Staying within the classroom following an interesting, educationally appropriate and child-friendly activity, where alternative supervision is not feasible;
- b. Split timetabling of religious education between class streams;
- c. Supervised project work/research in another room [where a member of staff is available];
- d. Parent/guardian absenting the child for the purpose of receiving religious instruction elsewhere.

Parents are normally advised of this when seeking placement in the school for their child.

The SET team and colleagues from the other classes normally supervise children whose parents do not wish them to attend church services.

Children of other faiths are invited but not obliged to attend all Catholic religious celebrations in the school. Individual children, with parental consent, can be invited to read

special prayers/texts promoting core values such as respect and tolerance, which are common to many faith groups. If Parents decide to excuse their child from school for the duration of any of these celebrations, written notification shall be sent to the principal teacher to facilitate any such request.

There is currently no facility for faith formation of pupils who are non-Catholic during school hours in Scoil Náisiúnta na mBuachaillí.

## Intercultural Dialogue

The Vatican publication, *Educating to Intercultural Dialogue in Catholic Schools*, has some practical implications of this intercultural approach. The document speaks of different types of dialogue; the dialogue of life, the dialogue of works and the dialogue of religious experience can involve all faith traditions present in the school. Pupils whose parents wish them to have no faith affiliation are invited to share in the dialogue of life and the dialogue of works.

### The Dialogue of Life

The dialogue of life reflects on the joys, challenges and sorrows of life, especially in the context of the fundamental realities of family, language and culture.

- a. All pupils in the school are made to feel welcome. This could include school displays, welcome notices in various languages, or flags of the various countries represented.
- b. Members of the board of management and of the school community engage in self-evaluation to ensure that the school retains its sense of inclusiveness.
- c. Cultural days are held in school where the various cultures represented are celebrated.
- d. When problems such as bullying and conflict situations arise, children are taught to be reconciled with one another in a respectful way, knowing the values of forgiveness and love. Reconciliation is a feature of daily life and children are encouraged to grow in appreciation of human dignity.
- e. The school provides mentoring opportunities for newly arrived international pupils and their parents.
- f. Children and parents are invited to dress in their national costumes and perform dance, music and poetry on appropriate occasions.
- g. The Parents' association encourages parents from other traditions to be active in school life.
- h. Key materials are translated as resources allow.

### The Dialogue of Works

The dialogue of works encourages those involved to collaborate in the holistic development of all men and women.

- a. School assemblies seek to awaken a sense of common responsibility for the future of humanity.

- b. All pupils are involved in development education projects, awakening a sense of responsibility towards those who are most in need.
- c. The school is involved in supporting local charities.
- d. School assemblies instil in students a sense of respect and care for the other person.
- e. All pupils participate in green flag and similar projects.
- f. The school is committed to developing the environmental awareness of pupils through the integrated curriculum.
- g. The school forms links with a school in a developing country.

### The Dialogue of Religious Experience

The dialogue of religious experience is based on the lived encounter of various faiths, not on intellectual abstractions, but rather on the actual lives of the faithful.

- a. School assemblies acknowledge major festivals associated with other faiths/traditions that are present in the school.
- b. Children are encouraged to share their beliefs and their cultural experiences, both within the classroom and amongst their friends. This can happen spontaneously through daily news and through integration with the curriculum.
- c. Using the internet, children grow an awareness of other faiths and cultures.
- d. Children make PowerPoint presentations for various projects and topics of interest, especially related to other faiths and cultures present within the school.
- e. Children of different faiths are given the opportunity to explain their beliefs to their classmates.
- f. Children are educated about other faiths through course work and projects.
- g. The school celebrates an intercultural week each year which highlights the faiths and cultures present in the school.
- h. All students are invited to participate in sacramental events/ceremonies.

### REVIEW

This Religious Education Policy will be reviewed biennially by the school community.

### RATIFICATION & COMMUNICATION

This policy is available to the staff, Parent's Association and Chairperson of the Parish Pastrol Council. The parent body are made aware of the Religious Education Policy through the school website and/or on enrolment.

The current policy was reviewed and ratified by the Board of Management on 21<sup>st</sup> March 2018

Next review scheduled March 2020

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Chairperson

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Principal

On behalf of the Board of Management.