

# *Our Lady of Lourdes N.S.*

## **Introductory Statement**

Our Lady of Lourdes N.S. is a Catholic school under the patronage of the Catholic Archbishop of Dublin.

The Staff, Board of Management, Chaplain, Parents Association and Student Council of Our Lady of Lourdes N.S. formulated the policy in January 2021

The Mission Statement for Our Lady of Lourdes N.S. is included with all welcome information for parents and staff and regularly reviewed. (A copy of the Mission statement is attached to this policy)

The Mission Statement of the School encourages the members of the school community to work in partnership with the parish and the home to ensure the children receive a holistic and inclusive education. The school community strives to live the Gospel values, which enables it to live its Catholic ethos, under its patroness, Our Lady of Lourdes.

## **The aim of religious education**

The aim of the religious education curriculum 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.

The curriculum distinguishes four interrelated strands of Christian faith, the Word of God, liturgy/prayer and Christian morality. The strands overlap and interact to form a holistic learning experience for the child.

- Christian Faith: Teaching and learning in this strand assists children to become religiously literate in key truths, doctrines and practices of the Catholic religious tradition.
- The Word of God: In this strand children are introduced to an age-appropriate way to Sacred Scripture in the life of the Church.
- Liturgy and Prayer: Children are encouraged to engage with liturgical signs, symbols and rituals which nurture their relationship with God as Father, Son and Spirit, and to develop their capacity for personal prayer and for participation in the liturgy of the Church.
- Christian Morality: The teaching and learning in this strand helps children to grow in awareness of their identity as persons created in the image and likeness of God and called to live in loving, respectful, relationship with God, other human persons and the whole of creation. The children are introduced to Jesus as the example for living an ethical life and are formed in gospel values and in love of God and neighbour.

## **History of the School:**

Our school was founded by the Sisters of Mercy in 1855 and was called Goldenbridge National School. In 1973 the Sisters of Mercy handed the school over to the diocese. A

new school building was built and our school changed its name to Our Lady of Lourdes National school.

## **1. The vision For Religious Education in a Catholic school**

In the Irish context the educational vision of the Church is a pastoral one. It acknowledges the complementary, connected, but different roles of the home, school and parish community in the faith education of children.

In this vision parents are the first and the primary teachers of their children in faith and the home is the first school of faith.

The parish is where children learn to worship, where they meet Jesus Christ in sacramental celebrations and where they experience and share in the mission of the Church.

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

•The educational dimension is centred and founded on the formal curriculum and focuses on the values and teachings of the Catholic Church. It teaches children the skills of spiritual, moral and religious literacy. The Religious Education outcomes at each level in the curriculum reflect this dimension.

•The faith formation dimension forms the children's characters in the virtues and values of Jesus, supports their faith development and helps them to experience what it means to be a member of the Church. The faith formation goals in the curriculum (pp 134-143) support and reflect this dimension.

An important part of this vision is our response to religious and cultural change in our society. Catholic schools are places where all are respected and valued. This includes the many different levels of faith that we will encounter in both our teachers and pupils and those pupils who are of other faiths and different stances for living.

## **2. The Catholic church and primary education**

- Staff in Our Lady of Lourdes NS are led and supported in the teaching of Religious Education by attending the annual in-service offered by the Education Secretariat, Archbishop's House, Drumcondra on an annual basis. Teachers who have not received the in-service on the Religious Education Curriculum and the *Grow in Love* programme have first preference.
- We have the Schedule for the Catholic School on display near the front entrance of the school and each class states the time, 30 minutes, on their class timetable in which Religious Education is taught each day.
- We have Religious symbols on display in every classroom and around the school building. There are visible signs of our Catholic faith and identity on display.
- A space in the porch at the entrance to our school reflects the liturgical seasons of the year. Ongoing communication takes place with Fr Louis and parish personnel. Throughout the school year, regular meetings are scheduled. The school supports and engages with charities such as Trócaire, thus heightening missionary awareness.
- Social justice awareness is highlighted through the school's support and engagement with charities such as Focus Ireland, Goal and Amnesty International.
- In our more culturally diverse community, our school welcomes all that is positive in this new reality, we instil an attitude of respect for the good of the other and welcome pupils of other faiths and none.

### **3. Aim of Religious Education Policy**

The purpose of this religious education policy is:

- To ensure that the school community strives 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.<sup>1</sup>
- To ensure that formal teaching in matters of belief, values and practice that equip children for a free and intelligent expression of personal faith within the family, Church and wider society is provided. (*based on Share the Good News 39*)
- To appreciate the richness of all religious traditions, especially those present in our school community and to provide a framework to encounter these traditions.
- To provide appropriate religious education for the different levels of faith commitment that we encounter in our classrooms
- To lead to a greater degree of clarity in respect of aims, procedures and roles for RE in the school.
- To assist all members of staff in the teaching of Religion.
- To consider strategies that respond to the needs of children of different faiths and other stances for living in terms of religious education.

### **4. General Information**

#### **Diocesan Information**

- Name of Archdiocese: Archdiocese of Dublin
- Name of Patron/Archbishop: Most Reverend Dermot Farrell D.D.
- Name of Director of Education: Msgnr Dan O'Connor, Episcopal Vicar for Education

#### **Parish Information**

- Name of Parish: St Michael's, Inchicore
- Name of Parish Priest: Fr Louis McDermott
- Name of Chairperson of Pastoral Council: Fr. Louis McDermott
- Name of Parish Pastoral Worker(s): Ms Pádraigín Clancy and Mr Pádraig Corcoran

#### **School Information**

- Name of Patron of School: Archbishop Dermot Farrell
- Name of Chaplain: Fr Louis McDermott OMI
- Name of Religious Education Coordinator: Ms. Siobhán Merry
- Name of Board of Management Members:
  - o Fr Louis McDermott
  - o Chairperson: Brendan Hestor
  - o Parent Nominees: Stephen Mc Donagh and Vicki Coulahan,
  - o Staff Nominee: Sean Gallagher
  - o Community Nominees: Gerry Byrne and Mateus Pongracic

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<sup>1</sup> Catholic Pre-School and Primary Religious Education Curriculum for Ireland (2015), page 12

## 5. Materials

- The Schedule for the Catholic School is on display and visible to all visitors to the school. (*A copy is attached to this policy*)
- The *Catholic Preschool and Primary Religious Education Curriculum for Ireland* (2015) is the foundation document for all Religious Education in Catholic primary schools. Each teacher has access to a copy of this curriculum.
- *Grow in Love* is the programme approved for use in Catholic primary schools in Ireland.
- Each teacher has his/her own *Grow in Love* Teacher manual, CD and poster set. Ensure each teacher has registered with the login code for the *Grow in Love* programme and using the school email address.
- Each child has access to the *Grow in Love* book appropriate to the child's own level
- Children at all class levels bring home materials from the *Grow in Love* programme each Wednesday
- Children have journals/copies designated for RE only from third class to sixth class
- The school uses the following approved Bibles (e.g. Contemporary English Version, the Good News Bible, New Revised Standard Version or The Catholic Children's Bible).
- The monthly memos sent out by the Education Secretariat are circulated to the teachers from the office

## 6. Prayer space

Each class has a designated prayer space, which changes following the guidelines in the *Grow in Love* Teacher manual and according to the Liturgical Year. It is a focal point in the classroom and it has many religious symbols on display. It also has some children's pictures and work on display and anything else a teacher wishes to decorate it with.

## 7. Prayer in Our School

- Religiously themed assemblies, communal prayer time and liturgical celebrations are timetabled during the school year *e.g. beginning and ending of school year Mass or Prayer Service, Advent and Lent celebrations, Catholic Schools Week celebration, Prayer Service in May, Feast day of Our Lady of Lourdes*
- Each Friday Assembly begins with the lighting of a candle and a prayer.
- There is a Prayer Space in every classroom. This space reflects the movement of the liturgical seasons. It also contains samples of the children's work, religious symbols and God's creation.
- Children take home the *Grow in Love* Children's book at specific and regular times. Parents are encouraged to pray with their children and accompany them in faith
- Important Feast Days are celebrated throughout the Church Year
- Board of Management Meetings begin with prayer and reflection.
- Time is allotted for prayer in every classroom at the beginning of the day, before and after lunch and before the children leave at home time
- Children are taught formal prayers and Mass responses as indicated by the curriculum and in the *Grow in Love* programme
- Every Prayer Space has a Bible (Catholic Children's Bible)
- There are symbols of the Catholic faith in every classroom *e.g.* a Holy Water Font, religious icon or picture, cross or crucifix.

## **8. State the arrangement for sacramental preparation between home and school.**

Leadership in the school makes a conscious effort to ensure that teachers in sacramental classes are faith filled witnesses to the Christian life. Children are prepared for the sacraments of Reconciliation, Holy Communion and Confirmation in partnership with parents and parish. It is understood that children's understanding of these sacraments develops throughout their time in primary school and beyond .

The school supports the ongoing conversation at parish and diocesan level about how best to prepare for and celebrate the sacraments of Reconciliation, Holy Communion and Confirmation.

The school works together with parents and parish to ensure that sacramental celebrations are authentic, sacred encounters with Jesus Christ. Practice for sacramental celebrations are confined to no more than two hours of school time.

### **Celebrating Reconciliation for the first time**

The celebration takes place in the local parish church in the evening time.

Parents and other family members are invited to celebrate the sacrament with their children.

### **Celebrating Holy Communion for the first time**

The Sacrament of First Holy Communion is celebrated in the Parish Church on a Saturday in May.

### **Confirmation**

Teachers of Confirmation classes are aware of the Diocesan Guidelines for Confirmation and together with school and parish leadership ensure that these guidelines are followed, in addition to the material in the *Grow in Love* programme.

Children preparing for Confirmation are offered a retreat experience either before/ after celebrating the sacrament. Parish led preparation for the sacrament is offered throughout the year (Appendix B)

## **9. Implementation of Religious Education throughout the school year**

In teaching the approved religious education programme, *Grow in Love* for use in the diocese, teachers are enabling children to learn the skills of moral, spiritual and religious literacy so that their understanding of their Christian faith is constantly deepened. We want the children to develop a mature and informed response to God's call to relationship.

The skills of religious literacy as defined by the curriculum are

- To understand,
- To communicate
- To participate.

In addition to these skills, there are the further skills of **spiritual literacy** and **inter-religious literacy**. (*Preschool and Primary Religious Education Curriculum for Ireland* (2015), pages 35-37). The programme is implemented in accordance with the Four Strands and Strand Units of the Curriculum:

- All of our teachers have a recognised qualification in religious education.
- Home links are made on a weekly basis in each class using the Children's *Grow in Love* Religious Education book.

- Each senior classroom has access to a set of Bibles .There is a Bible in each classroom Prayer Space.
- The faith formation dimension, which forms the children's characters in the virtues and values of Jesus, supports their faith development and helps them to experience what it means to be a member of the Church is recognised and supported as an integral part of religious education. The Catholic ethos is promoted through the daily living of the Gospel values

## **10. Timetabling and teaching staff**

- Religious education is timetabled in each classroom for the designated time of 2 ½ hours per week .It is timetables for 30 minutes per day across all class levels.
- Religious education is included in all teachers' notes and Cúntas Míósúil
- All teachers have access to a copy of the Catholic Preschool and Primary Religious Education Curriculum for Ireland (2015)
- All teachers have the relevant *Grow in Love* material required to teach religious education in their classroom
- The Principal distributes all resources, including the Monthly Memos and relevant communication from the Diocesan Advisor's office
- Any opportunities for ongoing professional development offered by the diocesan office are regularly offered to teachers

## **11. Partners in education**

### Home

The school seeks to involve parents in the children's religious education by:

- Encouraging parents to have a prayer space at home during sacramental preparation.
- Ensuring parents know which prayers their children are learning and encouraging them to pray with their children at home.
- Inviting parents to attend prayer services, assemblies, Mass and other religious celebrations and accompanying their children in faith.
- Religion homework once per week.

### Parish

- Relationships between school leadership and parish leadership are fostered and encouraged.
- The school meets regularly with parish leadership to plan for visitation of classrooms, visits to the church, celebration of feast days, Key liturgical celebrations in the school calendar, sacramental preparation and celebration.
- The school supports the parish in offering parish led preparation for the sacraments.

### Pupils of other traditions

In accordance with the norms of the Catholic preschool and Primary religious education Curriculum of Ireland (2015) p. 29, the children will have:

- Level 2, First and Second Class, one and half hours of study of other faiths per year
- Level 3, Third and Fourth class, one week of study of other faiths per year
- Level 4, Fifth and Sixth class, two weeks of study of other faiths per year

## **12. Inclusion of pupils of other faiths and other stances for living**

- In Our Lady of Lourdes we have a caring learning environment where each child is welcomed, respected, cherished and facilitated in reaching their full potential whatever their background, nationality or faith.
- We currently have children from 11 different faiths in our school. (Appendix C). Our school is hospitable, open and inclusive. We continuously strive to best practice concerning the inclusion of pupils in our school.
- The Admission Policy, including the Schedule and Mission Statement make it clear that we are a Catholic School under the patronage of the local Catholic bishop (please see attached).
- It is clear to parents enrolling their children that the Catholic ethos of our school permeates the whole school day and not just the formal religious education class.
- Our Enrolment Policy makes clear that we welcome diversity and inclusion and that we believe that the presence of children from diverse backgrounds enhance and enrich our school community.

## **13. Children with Special Educational Needs.**

Provision for Religious Education is made for children with Special Educational Needs as indicated by the Special Education Curriculum Guidelines page 146-154 as required.

### Pre- enrolment meeting

A pre-enrolment meeting is held to discuss our school with incoming parents. Parents are made aware that there are prayers at assemblies, and at moments during the school day. It is made clear that for children of other faiths and different stances for living that these can be times for personal reflection.

Parents are given an understanding of the nature of religious education in the Catholic Primary School. Any parent that has concerns about the content of the religious education programme are invited to meet with the principal/teacher/religious coordinator.

## **14. Ongoing communication, opportunities for inclusion and parental choice**

- Parents whose children are of other faiths or different stances for living 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.
- Individual children, with parental consent, may wish to participate in these celebrations by reading appropriate prayers and texts, participating in art or drama, being part of the choir, playing an instrument etc.
- Parents are free to absent their child from school for the duration of these events. Consideration is given to the timing of these events.
- Care is taken that the time allotted to religious education is not exceeded during times of sacramental preparation.
- Notice boards and school displays are used to make pupils feel welcome.
- Reconciliation is a feature of daily life. Staff and children are encouraged to grow in appreciation of human dignity. This is embedded in our Code of Behaviour and is reflected in our use of Restorative Practice methods.
- School assemblies acknowledge festivals associated with the other faith traditions present in the school.

- Children of different faiths are given the opportunity to explain their beliefs to other children.
- Key materials are translated on request.
- Children of different faiths are given the opportunity to explain their beliefs to other children.
- RE and Ethos will be discussed at the opening staff meeting of the year.
- In partnership with the Board of Management, the school will implement the catholic schools partnership's process, "understanding and living the ethos in a catholic primary school a process centred on conversations."

## **15 Role of the Religious Education Coordinator**

The religious education coordinator will coordinate Religious education within the school alongside the school principal.

## **14. REVIEW**

This policy was reviewed in January 2021.

## **15. RATIFICATION AND COMMUNICATION**

The Board of Management ratified the policy on \_\_\_\_\_. The policy will be available for the school community to view on our school website.  
<https://ourladyoflourdesns.ie/school-policies/>

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

Chairperson:

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

Principal

Date: \_\_\_\_\_



## **Bibliography**

*Catholic Preschool and Primary Religious Education for Ireland* (Veritas: Irish Episcopal Conference, 2015)

*Understanding and living the faith in a Catholic primary school-a process centred on conversations* (VERITAS PUBLICATIONS, 2019)

*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, Eng. Trans., (Veritas: Dublin, 1994)

*The Irish Catholic Catechism for Adults* (Veritas: Irish Episcopal Conference, 2014)

General Directory for Catechesis – Congregation for the Clergy (Veritas: Dublin, 1998)

*The Catholic Children's Bible* (St. Mary's Press: 2013)

*The Lion Children's Bible* (Lion Children's Books: 2012)

*Read With Me Bible – A Story Bible for Children* (Candlebooks: England, 2004)

*Share the Good News: National Directory for Catechesis in Ireland* (Veritas: Irish Episcopal Conference, 2010)

*Catholic Schools in a Changing Ireland: Sharing Good Practice on Inclusion of All Pupils* (Catholic Schools Partnership: 2015)

CPSMA Handbook (CPSMA: Maynooth, 2016)

*Catholic Primary Religious Education in a Pluralist Environment* by Anne Hession (Veritas: 2015)

*Children, Catholicism and Religious Education* by Patricia Kieran and Anne Hession (Veritas: Dublin, 2005)