



Nurturing excellence in education

# RELIGION POLICY

St Joseph's School

*"Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these."*

*Matthew 19:14*

Catholic schools are inclusive schools which are founded on the principles of equality, respect and

love. The Catholic school has an integral part to play in helping children to experience God's love. understand the teachings of Jesus and to embrace a way of life rooted in a friendship with Him.

Pope Francis reminds us that the first proclamation that must ring out over and over in our Religious Education is that "Jesus Christ loves you; He gave His life to save you; and now He is living at your side every day to enlighten, strengthen and free you".

In the Catholic school the educational mission of the Church finds a particular important expression.

As with all schools, the Catholic school is concerned with the ongoing development of the potential of every individual. What is distinctive however in the Catholic school is that it is centred on the person of Jesus Christ. His teaching and living a life that emulates these Christian values.

### **INTRODUCTORY STATEMENT**

In St Joseph's N.S. we proudly display the *Schedule for the Catholic School*.

#### **Vision Statement:**

St Joseph's NS is an inclusive school which embraces and celebrates the uniqueness of every pupil. We are committed to providing an educational setting directed at developing the child's personality and talents, preparing the child for an active life as an adult, fostering respect for basic human rights, developing respect for the child's own cultural and national values and those of others and developing respect for the global environment.

#### **Mission Statement:**

St. Joseph's N.S. aims to create a nurturing and caring environment where staff, pupils and parents support each other in the pursuit of holistic and inclusive education. In close and proactive partnership with family, church and community, we accompany each other in our journey towards the fullest possible expression of human flourishing. We seek to instil in our students recognition of self – worth; an appreciation and tolerance of difference; a respect and kindness towards others and a caring attitude towards the environment

## **GENERAL INFORMATION**

### **Diocesan Information**

Diocese: Archdiocese of Armagh

School Patron/Senior Trustee: Archbishop Eamon Martin

[Co. Louth Education Secretary: Mrs Niamh Black]

### **Parish Information**

- Holy Family Parish

- Fr. John Hand

- Muirne Lawlor

### **School Information**

- St Joseph's N.S

- Fr John Hand

- Sr Joan Watters, Dr Rosalyn Morris, Fr. John Hand, Anne Watters, Paddy Larkin, Alan Nelson, Ashling McNamara, John Gray.

- Alan Nelson

- Muirne Lawlor

## **AIM OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

The aim of Religious Education in the school is principally to help children mature in relation to their spiritual moral and religious lives through their encounter with exploration and celebration of the Catholic faith. Its main function is to explore step by step the mystery of Christ the teaching of the Church and its application to daily life. It needs to be clearly focused and should encourage young people to be critical analytical and reflective.

In a Catholic school, therefore the Religious Education of pupils is accomplished in two equal and complementary ways:

- (i) through the totality of the experiences in the school and;
- (ii) through the Religious Education programme *Grow in Love*.

A community hands on its faith and values most effectively by living them. Faith development should be promoted through the entirety of the school experience - including regular contact with the wider parish community celebration of the sacraments and assemblies centered on prayer - as much as by the learning which takes place in the formal Religious Education class .

Children will learn how to participate in prayer they will know the traditional prayers by the year they receive Holy Communion for the First Time and be competent in saying them.

Children will develop virtue personal and social responsibility, ecological consciousness and the ability to act in accordance with an informed conscience when making moral decisions.

Children will develop Christian attitudes and values: for example love, justice, compassion, truthfulness and respect and they will develop an understanding of what membership of the Church means.

## **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION POLICY STATEMENT**

At St Joseph's NSA our mission is to develop as a community of faith and learning, providing the highest quality of education and offering formation through the promotion of the Gospel values through celebration and worship and through service to the common good. We Believe that faith in Jesus Christ is central to the full and harmonious development of the person: intellectual, physical, emotional, moral and spiritual. Our school provides Religious Education as a core subject in the curriculum. At St Joseph's N.S we value and promote the distinctive but complementary roles of home, school and parish as together we work to promote the well-being and freedom of every person made in the image and likeness of God.

## **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION CURRICULUM AND PROGRAMME**

The *Catholic Preschool and Primary Religious Education Curriculum for Ireland*. published by the Irish Episcopal Conference in 2015. is the formal Religious Education curriculum for primary schools in the whole island of Ireland. It provides a structured outline of what Religious Education. as an academic discipline in Catholic schools contributes to the Catholic education and formation of young people.

This curriculum provides a solid foundation for *Grow in Love*. the Religious Education programme used in St Joseph's N.S. and all other resource material used to enhance Religious Education lessons. This curriculum also emphasises the cross-curricular nature of Religious Education which pervades all academic subjects and aspects of life and education in Catholic schools for instance policies concerned with Anti-Bullying, RSE, SPHE / PDMU.

## **PARENTS AND GUARDIANS**

St Joseph's N.S appreciates that parents and guardians are the primary educators of their children and therefore partnership between school and parents/ guardians needs to be sustained and strengthened. This is achieved in St Joseph's N.S. through information evenings for parents and guardians. For children receiving the sacraments, this is complemented by participation in programmes such as *Do This In Memory Of Me* in preparation for Holy Communion for the First Time and *You Will Be My Witnesses* in preparation for Confirmation . There is ongoing communication with parents and guardians regarding the Religious Education programme *Grow in Love* through the home activity which they are encouraged to complete together with their children on a weekly basis. Parents and guardians are asked to support teachers in school by reinforcing Gospel values at home.

## **BOARD OF MANAGEMENT**

The Board of Management has overall responsibility for the curriculum in a Catholic school. It is guided in its management of Religious Education by the principal, teachers and RE Co-ordinator. It has a particular responsibility for the appointment of teachers who are suitably qualified and who will support and promote the aims and objectives of the Religious Education policy and ethos of the Catholic school. The Board of Management should also encourage and support the principal and teachers in their personal and professional faith development. They need to ensure that Religious Education is well resourced with suitable catechetical materials and that the correct time is allocated for its delivery in the class room.

## **PRINCIPAL**

It is essential that the Catholic ethos of the school is promoted by the principal. This is evident by her/his words and actions. The principal endeavours to make possible a coherent and co-ordinated approach to Religious Education by working closely with the local parish to ensure a holistic contribution to the pupils' deepening awareness and understanding of the faith into which they have been baptised. She/he will ensure that teachers have access to ongoing professional development and formation in Religious Education.

## **RE CO-ORDINATOR**

The role of the RE Co-ordinator is of central importance in a Catholic school. In co-operation with the Board of Management the principal, the local parish and the teachers she/he ensures that the Catholic life of a school is sustained and nurtured. In her/his role she/he contributes significantly to the realisation of the overall Christian vision of the school.

## **TEACHERS**

Teachers can and do play a significant role in the lives of the children they teach. They can be one of the most formative influences in their lives and can do this by:

- creating an open and caring atmosphere in their classrooms;
- allowing children to feel valued and to recognise their potential and individuality;
- helping children to develop respect for themselves, for others, for the world in which they live and for God;
- respecting every child and their background;
- respecting cultural diversity in a climate that promotes openness and communication;
- developing within each child the knowledge that God loves them. and that God who has given them the gift of life cares for them;
- helping children develop confidence and self esteem;
- helping children develop an understanding of the sacraments of the Church;
- fostering links between the home. school and parish;
- providing opportunities for prayer within the classroom;
- instilling in young people an understanding of Gospel values and how to apply them to life a life lived in the service of others.

## **CHAPLAIN**

The role of the chaplain is to:

- visit the school regularly;
- be available to provide pastoral care to the school community;
- foster links between the home, school and parish;
- support and encourage the sacramental preparation of pupils in collaboration with parents/guardians;
- be familiar with the Religious Education programme Grow in Love.

## **DIOCESAN ADVISOR**

The Archdiocese of Armagh as part of its responsibility to support faith development in Catholic schools provides guidance in the person of the Primary Diocesan Advisor for Religious Education. Their role is to:

- visit schools;
- monitor and evaluate the provision of Religious Education in schools, providing principals and RE co-ordinators with appropriate feedback and direction;
- support the Board of Management/Governor, school principal and RE co-ordinator in the faith life of the school;
- support priests in their role as school chaplains;
- provide in-service programmes and resources for co-ordinators, teachers and chaplains;
- offer support and advice on the development of Catholic ethos within schools;
- encourage the use of and make provision for retreat days for staff and pupils;
- support the school and parish in the development and implementation of sacramental preparation programmes and faith development programmes for families;
- inform the Archbishop of the work and challenges encountered in schools in relation to Religious Education;
- support schools in the development and delivery of a RSE policy and programme which reflects the Catholic ethos and respects the wishes of parents/guardians.

## **A LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

Religious Education in primary schools takes place on the island of Ireland within circumstances supported by Education Acts in both jurisdictions. The Education Act (1998) states the requirement that schools "promote the moral, spiritual, social and personal development of students, in consultation with their parents, having regard for the Characteristics spirit of the school" (Government of Ireland Education Act). In the Irish Republic the various patron bodies are responsible for the development and implementation of the curriculum of Religious

Education in primary schools.

## **WITHDRAWING PUPILS FROM RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

### **Republic of Ireland**

- (a) No pupil shall receive be present at any Religious Instruction of which his/her parents/guardians disapprove.
- (b) The periods for formal Religious Instruction is fixed so as to facilitate the withdrawal of pupils to whom paragraph (a) of this section applies (Rules for National Schools: Rule 69).

Ongoing monitoring and evaluation of the Religious Education programme in school is essential. As with other subjects the coordinator in line with the school assessment policy should regularly monitor and evaluate the quality of provision within the school.

**This policy was ratified by the Board of Management of St Joseph's N.S on the 21<sup>st</sup> day of January 2020, and is in line with the Religious Education policy of the Archdiocese of Armagh and it will be reviewed every five years.**

**Dr Roz Morris  
Principal**

**Sr. Joan Watters  
Chairperson, B.O.M**