



**Ethos and Religious Education Policy**  
**St. Patrick's B.N.S.**  
**Drumcondra, Dublin 9**

**1. Introductory Statement**

This policy was formulated in consultation with the BOM, teachers, chaplain, parents, Special Needs Assistants, ancillary staff and student council.

**2. The Catholic Church and Primary Education [CPSMA Hbk, Section 2]**

St. Patrick's B.N.S. has a Catholic ethos built on Gospel values. While we are a Catholic school, and operate under the patronage of the Archdiocese of Dublin, we are inclusive and welcoming of all faiths and traditions. We instill in our pupils common values such as kindness, respect, patience, tolerance and generosity. Where children of non Catholic faiths attend our school, they remain in the classroom with their class, and, subject to parent's agreement, participate as appropriate in religious education.

The Schedule for the Catholic School and our Mission Statement are displayed in the welcome area in the senior school building. As a Roman Catholic School, our aim is to promote the full and harmonious development of all aspects of the person of each pupil: intellectual, physical, cultural, moral and spiritual, including a living relationship with God and other people. In our school, we seek to model and promote a philosophy of life inspired by belief in God and in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The school provides religious education of the pupils in accordance with the doctrines, practices and tradition of the Roman Catholic Church and promotes the formation of the pupils in the Catholic Faith.

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

The aim of this policy is to affirm our Catholic ethos, to outline the whole school approach to the teaching of Religious Education and to assist all members of staff in the teaching of Religion (see Appendix 2)

### **4. General Information**

#### **Diocesan Information/ Parish Information**

St. Patrick's B.N.S. is under the patronage of the Catholic Archbishop of Dublin, Dermot Farrell. Msg. Dan O'Connor is the Director of Education in the diocese.

The school is located on the grounds of Dublin City University's St. Patrick's Campus. 'Practising Schools' attached to St. Patrick's College were built on this site in 1894 and were replaced by the present buildings. The school continues to enjoy strong links with the university. Our Chaplain, Fr. Paul Hampson, is also Chaplain to St. Patrick's Campus.

The school is located within the Parish of Corpus Christi. Fr. Richard Sheehy is the Parish Moderator and Msg. Martin O Shea is Co-Parish Priest.

Sunday Family Mass: Students and their families are welcome to attend the St. Pat's Family Mass at 11am each Sunday during term time in the college chapel. It is a child and family-focused mass with an emphasis on participation for all.

#### **School Information**

The members of the school Board of Management are:

Prof Anne Looney (Chairperson)

Ms Natasha Bassett (Principal/ Secretary)

Mr John Moore (Staff nominee)

Fr Paul Hampson (Patron nominee)

Mr Paul Clarke (Parent Nominee)

Ms Siobhan Coughlan (Parent Nominee)

Ms Cliona Kernan (Community Nominee)

Mr Eamonn O'Connell (Community Nominee)

### **5. Materials**

The *Catholic Preschool and Primary Religious Education Curriculum for Ireland* is the foundation document for all Religious Education in Catholic primary schools.

The *Grow in Love* programme is used for Religious Education in our school and was developed in line with the *Catholic Preschool and Primary Religious Education Curriculum for Ireland*.

Each teacher has the teacher kit:

- 1: Teacher's Manual
- 2: Children's Book
- 3: CD
- 4: Poster Set
- 5: Online Resources, incl login code for Grow in Love website.

These resources are collected and stored centrally at the end of each year and redistributed the following year. Children either purchase the *Grow in Love* books or get them as part of the book rental scheme. Sixth classes use the *Veritas* Confirmation Workbook.

The books facilitate links between home and school. The children bring these books home regularly to complete the activities in them. A set of approved bibles for class use has been acquired. Additional resources are drawn on for school liturgies and sacramental preparation. Planning guides from the Education Secretariat are distributed monthly. Additional resources linking to the liturgical year may be accessed from the website of the Education Secretariat at [www.education.dublindioocese.ie](http://www.education.dublindioocese.ie). These are highlighted through the year.

The *Grow in Love* posters are also displayed around the school at various times throughout the year to enhance its Catholic identity. Provisions are in place so that Religious Education is provided for children with Special Educational Needs within all classes.

### **Sacred Space & Christian Symbols**

The Christian message is reinforced throughout the year through the Religion/Ethos display board in the school welcome area and individual classroom Sacred Spaces. Displays are changed regularly to reflect the Liturgical Year and God's creation. The Entrance Sacred Space displays during the first term usually reflect:

- The starting of the new school year together as a Christian community;
- Remembering and praying for deceased relatives and friends (November);
- Seasons of Advent and Christmas.

During the second term, the entrance religion display board reflects themes such as:

- Feast of the Epiphany (January 6<sup>th</sup>)

- The Sacrament of Penance
- Catholic Schools Week;
- St. Brigid, St. Francis, St. Patrick;
- The season of Lent and Easter.

Display themes in the third term can include:

- Easter,
- Confirmation
- Pentecost
- Eucharist
- Our Lady,
- 6<sup>th</sup> Class Graduation and New beginnings

Connections are made with other related subject areas when appropriate (e.g. Friendship (Anti-bullying) Week in September/October). Displays can also reflect children's work on class themes.

### **School Prayer Services & Masses**

Prayer is incorporated into children's daily life at school. Classes visit the chapel regularly for private prayer throughout the year. In addition, children from first to sixth class gather together for regular assemblies. Prayer and prayer services are integrated into assembly, usually led by our Chaplain, Fr. Paul. During the first term we mark the Opening of the School Year, the Feast of All Saints & the month of the Holy Souls, and the start of the Season of Advent.

Each November children are invited to include the names of their deceased relatives and friends on a school 'List of the Dead'. Names of the deceased are displayed in class sacred spaces and included in the 'In November we Remember' Scrapbook which is displayed on the Religion/Ethos display board in the foyer and presented during the prayer service to mark the Feast of All Saints and the month of the Holy Souls.

### **Newsletter**

Our chaplain, Fr Paul, contributes to our newsletter regularly, including a blessing and prayer for the pupils and their families.

### **Lent and Easter**

Where Ash Wednesday falls on a school day, arrangements are made for prayer services for different class levels at which ashes are distributed. Similarly, where St. Blaise's Day falls on a school day,

arrangements can be made for the blessing of throats by our School Chaplain.

### **Catholic Schools Week**

Catholic Schools Week is celebrated in the second term. Themes are explored in each class when the principal, together with children from sixth class, lead the school in prayer during the week via the intercom. Children in third classes invite their grandparents to the school on the Wednesday of this week for a special prayer service to mark Grandparents' Day. A School Prayer Service concludes this week.

### **Christmas Carol Service**

After mid-term a meeting is held to discuss and plan the school carol service. During the month of December the senior school community gather to rehearse together the carols that they have worked on in class in preparation for the Christmas Carol Service, which their parents can attend.

In the junior school building the children, together with their teachers, prepare during the month of December to share the Christmas Story with their parents through song, poetry and drama.

### **Mass for the Celebration of Feast Days**

Where December 8<sup>th</sup> and/or January 6<sup>th</sup> fall on school days, our Chaplain, Fr. Paul, celebrates Mass for the Feast of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary on December 8<sup>th</sup> and for the Feast of the Epiphany on January 6<sup>th</sup> in the college chapel for the children in the senior building.

### **Graduation Mass**

Fr. Paul celebrates Mass for sixth class children and their parents towards the end of June. The boys reflect on memories of their time in St. Patrick's B.N.S. and upon their hopes and dreams for the future in advance of the Mass. Their reflections are gathered together and presented at the start of the Mass.

### **Sacramental Preparation, Parental Engagement and Pupils of other faiths and none**

Children in our school receive the sacraments of First Penance and First Eucharist in second class. Children are usually confirmed in the third term of sixth class. Any children attending either of the Special

Language classes who wish to receive the sacraments in St. Patrick's B.N.S. are integrated with 2<sup>nd</sup> or 6<sup>th</sup> classes for sacramental preparation. Where a child joins a more senior class in the school and wishes to receive the sacraments of First Penance and First Eucharist, arrangements are made to facilitate this. Children of other faiths are welcome to join in the Religious education programme (at their parents' discretion) and to celebrate with their class at the ceremonies. Their names are included in the Missalette/Booklet under the heading 'Celebrating with us Today'.

### **Sacrament of Penance and First Holy Communion**

In November a 'Mass of Commitment' for First Holy Communicants and their families is celebrated in conjunction with the Sunday Family Mass in the college chapel.

### **Meeting for Parents of Children in Second Class**

There is a meeting for parents of children who will receive their First Holy Communion every year. The focus of this meeting is the children's preparation for both the sacrament of Penance and First Holy Communion. The children's school-based preparation is outlined by one of their teachers.

Traditionally, candles bearing the children's names, are made by the Redemptoristine sisters in their local monastery on St. Alphonsus Road. Parents are told about the fact that the nuns pray for each child while working on his/her individual candle. Parents are encouraged to light this special candle when praying or reading from the Bible with the children at home in preparation for First Confession and Communion. The candles are lit for the first time at the Mass of Commitment.

Parents are encouraged to engage with their local parish-based 'Do this in Memory' sacramental programme. In addition, Fr. Paul invites parents and children to attend the Sunday Family Mass in the college.

The First Confession ceremony usually takes place in February before the mid-term break. The children explore the meaning of the Gospel story (eg Zacchaeus) through drama and song as part of the ceremony.

Finally, practical arrangements for the ceremonies (including seating arrangements) are discussed.

### **Sacrament of Confirmation**

A meeting for parents of Confirmation candidates from both St. Patrick's B.N.S. and Corpus Christi G.N.S. children and each schools' Chaplains, Principals, Sixth Class Teachers and Coordinators is held in the first term.

The team collaborates in outlining Confirmation preparation at school and parish level. Monsignor Martin invites parents to engage with the Corpus Christi parish-based sacramental programme. Parents are alerted to the fact that their children will be encouraged to discuss the Confirmation Pledge concerning alcohol and drugs (and charitable contribution) with them during the second school term in advance of the Ceremony of Light. Seating arrangements for the candidates, their sponsors and parents are also discussed.

### **Schools Planning Meeting**

During the second term a meeting is organized between the teachers of sixth class, principals, chaplains and coordinators of both St. Patrick's B.N.S and Corpus Christi G.N.S in order to plan the Confirmation Ceremony. The allocation of readings, prayers and roles, updating of the Missalette, and the selection of hymns for the ceremony are addressed at this meeting.

The Ceremony of Light usually takes place in March after the mid-term break. Children are encouraged by their teachers to discuss with their parents the Confirmation Pledge which they make in the silence of their hearts during the ceremony.

Separately, children in fourth and fifth classes are also involved in preparations for the sacraments. Each year the fourth and fifth classes, together with fourth and fifth classes from Corpus Christi G.N.S., comprise the choir for the Confirmation Ceremony. The children learn the hymns in class and rehearse both separately and together in preparation for Confirmation. This tradition of service through contributing their talents is encouraged.

A small number of children volunteer their services as a 'Harmony Group'. These boys rehearse during their lunch-break in the weeks before Confirmation. This group also sings for the First Communion Ceremony.

### **First Communion Mass and Confirmation Ceremony**

Both sacraments are usually celebrated during the third school term. The Confirmation Ceremony takes place in Corpus Christi Church. The First Communion Mass is celebrated in St. Patrick's Campus Chapel of Our Lady Seat of Wisdom.

A second opportunity for children in the sacramental classes to attend Confession is arranged in advance of the sacraments. Children in second class are afforded the opportunity to use a confessional in the college chapel. Confirmation Candidates wear albs for the Confirmation Ceremony. During the Mass for First Holy Communion, each child has a specific role on the day. In addition, artwork completed as part of the children's preparation is displayed in the church for the ceremony.

### **Parents' Association**

In collaboration with the Deputy Principal, parents from the Parents' Association arrange teas and coffees for the end of meetings, affording the parents of the children in sacramental classes opportunities for asking questions informally and strengthening home, school and community links.

In addition, there is a tradition where the parents of children in first class arrange a celebration in the senior school hall for the First Holy Communicants and their relatives directly after the First Communion Mass. This allows the children and their parents and teachers to celebrate this special day together.

### **Action for Social Justice and Missionary Awareness**

The school seeks to foster in our children an outward-looking care for the less fortunate in society. Every Christmas, a school collection is organized for the Society of St. Vincent de Paul. Children throughout the school bring in food parcels and toys generously donated by their families and leave them for collection under the tree in the school foyer.

In addition, sixth classes organise a number of cake sales and sales of work throughout the year in aid of a selected charity, which all classes support. Cakes and treats bought or baked at home are donated by children from every class in the school for the event.

Separately, following their Confirmation, the sixth classes research, nominate and vote on the selection of a charity to support through a voluntary donation of a portion of money they have received at Confirmation.

At the start of Lent, Trócaire boxes are distributed to all classes. Representatives from Trócaire are often invited to speak to children about the Trócaire Lenten Campaign for the current year.

A whole-school Penalty Shoot Out is organised during the year in order to raise funds for Special Olympic Athletes.

### **Partners in Religious Education**

The school works in partnership with the children, their parents and the wider parish community. We are very fortunate to have a School Chaplain, Fr. Paul Hampson, who gives generously of his time and expertise to support us in our work. Our location on a university campus in proximity to the chapel affords classes opportunities to visit the chapel.

In addition, Monsignor Martin O'Shea also visits and supports the sixth class children in their preparation for Confirmation and includes them and their parents in the Corpus Christi Parish Confirmation Sacramental Preparation Programme.

Teachers at each class level avail of continuous professional development courses related to the Religious Education programmes provided by the Diocesan Advisors.

The school has a coordinator of Religious Education to support the Principal in developing and maintaining the Catholic ethos of the school.

### **Contribution of School Secretary and Caretaker**

In addition to the work of class teachers and SNAs, our school secretary and caretaker contribute to the school's preparation of children for the sacraments and the implementation of Religious Education through the year. Printing of booklets, distribution of letters to parents, movement of furniture and equipment and setting up of rehearsal spaces are aspects of the organization for implementing the programmes to which they contribute.

**Review**

This policy will be reviewed every three years, or as the need arises.

**Ratification and Communication**

The Ethos and Religious Education Policy was ratified by the Board of Management on 14th June 2021.

Signed:

Prof. Anne Looney (Chairperson)

Ms. Natasha Bassett (Principal)

June 2021

# Appendix

## **1. BIBLIOGRAPHY**

*Catholic Preschool and Primary Religious Education for Ireland*  
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*The Irish Catholic Catechism for Adults* (Veritas: Irish Episcopal Conference, 2014)

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

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(Catholic Bible Press: United States of America, 1993)

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*Good News Bible: Schools' Edition* (Collins: The Bible Societies, 2005)

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

*Share the Good News: National Directory for Catechesis in Ireland*  
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*Catholic Schools in a Changing Ireland: Sharing Good Practice on Inclusion of All Pupils* (Catholic Schools Partnership: 2015)

*CPSMA Handbook* (CPSMA: Maynooth, 2016)

*Assemblies for Primary Schools* by Elaine Mahon and Maurice Harmon  
(Veritas: 2012)

*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)

## 2. Aim of Religious Education

The aim of Religious Education is to foster and deepen the children's faith. People of faith perceive themselves and their world in a special way. Faith is active. As people of faith we are aware of God as a presence in our lives. We see things in relation to God. This awareness calls for a response. Our lives become a response to a compassionate and loving God. Faith is our response to God's self-communication to us through revelation. God's initiative is a gift, an invitation. The response we make is our choice, our decision. It is a response that no one can make on behalf of another, neither can it be forced from anyone. What is possible, however, is the creation of a context wherein people have the opportunity to become aware of God's invitation, to hear God's word and to explore how best they can respond in their own lives.

Faith is a personal act – the free response of the human person to the initiative of God who reveals himself. But faith is not an isolated act. No one can believe alone, just as no one can live alone. You have not given yourself faith as you have not given yourself life. The believer has received faith from others and should hand it on to others. Our love for Jesus and for our neighbour impels us to speak to others about our faith. Each believer is thus a link in the great chain of believers. I cannot believe without being carried by the faith of others, and by the faith I help support others in the faith.

*(Catechism of the Catholic Church, 166)*

The presence of God in our lives is revealed in a unique way through the person and teaching of Jesus Christ. Those involved in the Religious Education of children today are offered the same challenge which Jesus offered his followers:

An argument arose among them as to which one of them was the greatest. But Jesus, aware of their inner thoughts, took a little child and put it by his side, and said to them, 'Whoever welcomes this child in my name welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me; for the least among all of you is the greatest' (Luke 9:46-48).

The Apostles judged who was the greatest according to a particular narrow set of values. Jesus, however, pointed out a different way of

viewing the situation, which caused the Apostles to review their previously held judgements. He continually challenged the people who were with him to new perspectives. He viewed life from a particular viewpoint – God’s viewpoint.

***from the 'Introduction to the Alive-O Programme'***

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The title of the religious education series for primary schools is *Grow in Love*. The Christian Tradition teaches us that God is the source of all love. The first Letter of St John states this very clearly: ‘God is love’ (1 Jh 4:8). Therefore, where there is love, there is God. Children experience the love of God through the love of their parents, families and others. Throughout this series we will help the children to come to a deeper understanding of the reality of God’s love in their lives: to know that God loves them unconditionally, that there is neither beginning nor end to the love of God, and that human love is only a hint of what God’s love is like.

The Gospel according to John helps us to see the implications of depth of God’s love for the world: ‘For God loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life’ (Jn 3:16). The love of God is made pre-eminently visible in the person of Jesus Christ. In his encyclical *Deus Caritas Est*, Pope Benedict XVI referred to Jesus as ‘the incarnate love of God’. By reaching out in love to people – and especially to those on the margins – Jesus brought the love of God to the world. This love eventually took him to the Cross, an act described as ‘love in its most radical form’ (*Deus Caritas Est*, no. 12).

So, what is our response to this incomprehensible, self-giving love? 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. They can show respect for God, for themselves, for one another and for all creation. We teach the children that, through the grace of God’s Spirit which we receive in Baptism, we are enabled to become witnesses to the love of God in the world by living as disciples of Jesus Christ.

***from the 'Grow in Love' Programme***