

School Ethos and Religious Education Policy



Introduction

St Patrick's National School is a co-educational Catholic primary school under the patronage of the Bishop of Meath.

The school models and promotes a philosophy of life inspired by belief in God and in the life of Jesus Christ. Our Catholic ethos represents the norms of behaviour which have emerged and continue to emerge gradually from the repeated interactions and relationships between people in the school community. While St Patricks N.S. is a school with a Catholic ethos, it has due recognition for pupils of other faiths or no faith.

School Ethos

Our Catholic ethos finds expression through the core values of our school and through our actions, attitudes and practices:

- We place all learning and teaching in a catholic moral context in both challenging and supporting our pupils to develop in mind, body and spirit.
- We give prominence to the quality of relationships alongside academic achievement.
- With this in mind, the teachers of the school see education not just as providing students with knowledge and skills but also as providing for their emotional, social, physical and spiritual development.

Religious Education and Faith Development

St Patrick's N.S. promotes Religious Education for the pupils in accordance with the doctrines, practices and traditions of the Catholic Church and promotes the formation of the pupils in the Catholic Faith. Sensitivity is always shown to pupils of all faiths.

St Patrick's N.S. has adopted the Grow in Love Catechetical Programmes that are approved and recommended by the School Patron for use in Catholic Schools. The programme is normally time tabled on four days a week for one half-hour, including morning and evening prayer. A Christian ethos however permeates the school day and the life of the school. There is a spirit of prayer in the school. The major Catholic and local feasts are celebrated. Liturgical celebrations are held on occasions and the whole school celebrate the sacraments of Reconciliation, First Holy Communion and Confirmation annually.

Whole School Dimension

In each classroom there is an atmosphere of openness, forgiveness and understanding. A sense of awe and wonder at the goodness, beauty and love of God is developed in the children. Meaningful icons, pictures and artworks are on display throughout the school building. The major Catholic and local feasts are celebrated. They are marked with the aid of signs and symbols displayed throughout the school:

- Advent – the Advent Wreath
- November – a Remembrance Tree
- Christmas – A Christmas Tree and Crib
- Feast of St. Brigid – traditions and crosses
- Lent – symbols of repentance and ashes

- Easter – symbols of the new life of resurrection
- Pentecost – artistic depiction of the coming of the Holy Spirit.

Liturgical celebrations are held on some occasions e.g.

- The closing of the school year
- Carol services at Christmas or a Christmas play
- Times of trauma or crisis
- Other occasions, which from time to time are considered appropriate to celebrate or to mark, are incorporated into school assemblies

The pupils of the school join:

- At the celebration of First Holy Communion and Confirmation
- School Mass at the end of the school year
- Other liturgical celebrations in co-operation with the parish e.g. 8th of December mass is watched via webcam from the church
- There is a Sacred Space in every classroom. This space contains religious symbols, posters, pictures and a bible.
- 6th Class children participate in a retreat before their Confirmation.

Partnership with Parents:

Our school seeks to involve parents in their children's religious education by

- Making a link with home in religious education regularly.
- Inviting Parents to attend Prayer services, Masses and other religious celebrations.
- Parents are involved in the preparation of their children for First Holy Communion, First Confession and Confirmation. Fr. Heaney and the parish run preparation programmes for both First Holy Communion and Confirmation candidates.

Connecting with our Parish

The Catholic education offered in St Patrick's N.S. is conducted in collaboration with the children's parents and the local parish. We see our role as being supportive of the role of parents and of the parish. Fr. Heaney visits the classrooms regularly. Opportunities are provided for:

- Distribution of ashes on Ash Wednesday
- Hearing of pupils confessions
- Informal lessons and talks to pupils on faith development
- Visit from the NET Team when available
- Praying with pupils

Spiritual Formation of Teachers

The Spiritual nourishment of teachers is understood by the Board of Management to be an integral part of the religious education programme undertaken by the school and will be supported in a positive manner throughout the school year.

Teaching Methodologies Used to Achieve Aims

- Study of *the Grow in Love* Teacher's guide
- Interactive learning
- Giving children prayer experiences that are meaningful
- Sacramental and non-sacramental liturgies
- Use of imagination in prayer
- Drama and role play on the theme of Christian Values
- Questions and answers, helping children to use their own words
- Vocal prayer

Other Religious Denominations:

Subject to the terms of enrolment and admission policy, we enrol pupils of other faiths or no faith in the school and accord due respect for their beliefs and practices in their own faith.

Consultation with parents and these pupils takes place on enrolment. Each child is welcome to attend and benefit from the Catholic religious education programme. If parents have difficulty with this, the Principal shall meet with them to see if an accommodation can be reached.

Sensitivity is always shown when pupils cannot participate in liturgical celebrations. The school cannot, however, undertake to educate children of other faiths in their own faith, nor can it provide supervision in a separate class environment during the religious education period. Supervision is offered in school for children of other faiths for school Masses which take place during the school day.

Children of other faiths who do not wish to participate in the RE class of the day or in meditation will be assigned work to do in the classroom for the duration of the class.

This Policy was ratified by the Board of Management of St. Patrick's N.S. Crowenstown on

Signed: Seamus Ó hEanagh

Chairperson Board of Management

Date: 24/11/2025