

Religious Education and Faith Development Policy

St Michael's N.S. Religious Education Policy was initially formulated by school staff, Parish Priest and B.O.M. in 2006. The policy was reviewed in 2018. This policy represents an updating of the previous school policy for Religious Education and recognises the recent introduction of the revised RE programme '*Grow In Love*' which has been phased into schools since Sept 2015.

General Information about the school

St Michael's N.S. is a co-educational vertical primary school with pupils from Junior Infants to 6th Class with an enrolment of approximately 112 pupils. The school was founded in 1982 and is located in the parish of Tubbercurry in the Achonry Diocese. The school Patron is the Catholic Bishop of Achonry. The parish church is a short walk from the grounds of St Michael's. Following the retirement of Fr Dan O Mahoney, Fr. Martin Jennings is the current parish priest and will serve on the school Board of Management. (November 2019-2023).

St Michael's follows the curriculum prescribed by the Department of Education and Skills. The school provides Religious Education for Catholic pupils in accordance with the doctrines, practices and tradition of the Roman Catholic Church. Pupils may be exempted from the religious education programme at the request of their parents.

Aim of Religious Education in St Michael's

The aim of Religious Education is to foster and deepen the children's faith through teaching the Catholic RE programme and through the cultivation of the Catholic Ethos of the school.

In St Michael's pupils are helped to understand that that the world is infused with the loving presence of God. Throughout the RE curriculum and the '*Grow in Love*' programme pupils are given an opportunity to notice, accept and celebrate the loving presence of God in their lives. The pedagogical style that is followed in the '*Grow in Love*' programme is characterised by three qualities: respect, invitation and conversation.

The programme incorporates the recommended approach to religious education for the reception of the sacraments of Penance, Holy Communion and Confirmation.

Religious Education Resources used in St Michael's

- The *Catholic Preschool and Primary Religious Education Curriculum for Ireland* is the foundation document for all Religious Education.
- The *Alive-O* programme has been phased out and the Grow in Love RE programme is now implemented in all classrooms.
- Each classroom has a 'Grow in Love Teacher Resource Kit' ie a teacher's manual and CD with password to the Grow in Love website with online resources linked to each theme & seasonal lessons. Also included is a copy of the pupil's book & flipchart of posters for the classroom Sacred Space.
- There are Bibles in the Library in some classrooms.
- The Grow in Love programme allows for the differentiation of the material given in each theme for SEN pupils or children who are gifted and talented.
- Resources for Catholic Schools Week (CWS) from the Diocesan Education Office are available to the school each January and are accessible for teachers to support RE and CSW events.

Religious Symbols in St Michael's

- A Schedule for Catholic Schools is displayed as you enter the school and in the Principal's Office.
- A Sacred Space may be present in classrooms. There is a Crucifix, Catholic Children's Bible and Holy Water Font in the school. Other symbols pertaining to the Liturgical year are also displayed i.e. Advent wreath, a Crib & St. Brigid's Day Cross.

Classroom Prayer Space

Each classroom may have its own designated Sacred Space arranged by teacher with symbols and pictures etc to reflect the Liturgical year and the themes of the RE programme being taught. Pupils are encouraged to pray during the school day and to add relevant symbols and prayers etc to the class sacred space.

The pupil's faith in St Michael's is supported by prayers as follows:

- As pupils progress through the class levels teachers encourage different forms of prayer ie vocal prayer word, meditative prayer and contemplative prayer.
- Each class level has a list of formal prayers to be learned in each class, cf. Appendix 1: Formal Prayers
- Teachers seek to create a prayerful atmosphere in class for prayer ie a candle may be lit, a hymn sung or meditative music played.
- Teachers encourage pupils to focus on their breathing, to be in a relaxed posture & to respect and enjoy prayerful silences.
- We partake annually in Catholic Schools' Week.

Sacramental Preparation

Sacramental preparation is a collaborative process with home, school and parish working together to prepare pupils for the sacraments. First Penance and First Communion preparation is undertaken in 2nd Class with Confirmation Preparation undertaken in 5th/6th Class every second year. 2021 5th/6th class will prepare for Confirmation. Date for Confirmation is decided by Bishop (following appointment).

The schedule for the celebration of the sacraments is as follows:

(2nd Class) First Penance in March /April & First Communion in May.

School based preparation:

In St Michaels's pupils are prepared thoroughly for the Sacraments of Penance & First Communion (2nd Class) & Confirmation (5th/ 6th Class) by their teachers in association with the parish/parents. Teachers and pupils follow the preparation lessons as presented in the relevant RE programme. Parents are notified of the dates of the sacraments once the dates are agreed between the school and the parish.

Parish based preparation

The “**Do this in Memory**” programme assists in the parish based preparation of pupils in 2nd class for First Communion. This is organised by the parish priest Fr Jennings.

“**You Shall be My Witness**” Programme similarly prepares pupils in 5th/6th class for Confirmation. This is facilitated by parent volunteers organised through the parish.

As these programmes are parish based all notifications re events will be organised by the parish priest and this is not the duty of the class

teacher. Preparation for these services is also organised by the priest/parish not the class teacher.

Implementation of Religious Education during the School Year

- Daily classes commence with a morning prayer and also a prayer before home time.
- Early in September a meeting is held between the Principal, Deputy Principal, R.E. Co-ordinator & School Chaplain to schedule all religious celebrations in the coming year including
- School masses are celebrated at the start and end of the school year.
- Catholic Schools' week is celebrated each year at the end of January.

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 and Jesse tree
- Christmas – tree and crib
- Feast of St. Brigid – traditional crosses
- Feast of St. Patrick – depiction of story and shamrock
- Lent – symbols of repentance and ashes
- 5th/6th classes attend a retreat in the weeks prior to Confirmation at the Fr Peyton Centre.
- Social justice awareness is highlighted various school events e.g. Christmas Shoebox Appeal.
- In-service was offered to teachers for the introduction of the Grow in Love programme.
- School Staff & BOM are notified of the date of the annual Diocesan School Mass organised by the Archdiocese.

Partners in Religious Education

Home/School: The pivotal role of parents as primary educators of their children is recognised. The Grow in Love RE Programme provides weekly at home pages to be completed which link directly with the weekly themes taught to the pupils. Feedback has been very positive from teachers & parents.

- Parents are invited to attend school masses via letter/text/parent service.
- The school newsletter and school website provides updates on aspects of R.E. Education and sacramental preparation in the school.

School/Parish: The parish organise and deliver the *Do This In Memory, You Shall Be My Witness* programmes.

Parents Association

St Michael's Parents Association organises receptions in the community centre after the Communion for the families and pupils involved.

Following Confirmation the P.A. also organise a party in the school.

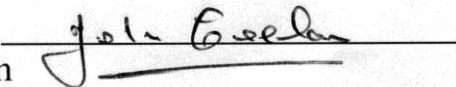
Accommodation of Pupils of Other Faiths and other stances for living

- If any parent requests that his/her child is not to partake in religious instruction we would ask that they contact the class teacher. Parents are welcome to view the religious programme taught- at the core is the commandment "Love God and love thy neighbour".
- Sensitivity is always shown when pupils cannot participate in liturgical celebrations.
- The school cannot however undertake to educate children of other faiths on their own faith, and if alternative supervision is not possible children stay within the classroom and engage in a different activity.
- All pupils and parents are invited to attend the school masses. However parents who do not wish their children to attend mass will need to make alternative arrangements re supervision of children as all teachers attend these masses.
- Pupils of other faiths and none who are in the sacramental classes are invited to attend the reception held after the Communion & Confirmation ceremonies. These pupils are also invited to be photographed with the other pupils in their classes who have celebrated the sacraments.
- Inter –Religious links are a welcome part of the Grow in Love programme. Such links provide information for teachers on festivals and celebrations from other religions. This provides an opportunity to include pupil/s in from other religious traditions or life stance in our school.

Religious Education and Faith Development Policy

The Catholic education offered in St. Michael's is conducted in collaboration with the children's parents and the local priest, Fr. Martin Jennings. We see our role as being supportive of the role of parents and parish.

This policy was initially ratified on 18th May 2006 and reviewed 2018.

Signed : 
Fr Geelan

Next review date: 2021.