

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION POLICY

Harold's Cross NS

Ratified by the Board on June 24th, 2020

Signed: Denis Smith, Chairperson

- Vision and Mission Statement

- Nature of Religious Education
- Aims of Religious Education & Rationale
- Curriculum
- Homework Policy
- Facilities and Resources
- Withdrawal from religious education
- Staff Support and Development
- Liturgy
- Sacred Space
- Religious Imagery
- Outreach Programmes
- Chaplaincy Services
- Retreats
- Parent Involvement
- Diocesan Support
- Policy monitoring and, timeframe
- Signature page

VISION STATEMENT

Harold's Cross NS is a Catholic school under the patronage of the Catholic Archbishop of Dublin. A Catholic school is a living expression of a long and varied tradition of education inspired by the life of Christ. Our school emphasises the dignity of the human person as a child of God, called to work with

other persons in creating an inclusive community in service of the common good, where knowledge is sought and respected while faith is nurtured and challenged.

Harold's Cross NS serves the needs of a diverse population. One of the great strengths of the school is its social inclusion. The presence of children from diverse backgrounds enriches the life of our school community.

MISSION STATEMENT

Harold's Cross N.S. is a co-educational, primary School, which strives to provide a well ordered, caring, happy and secure atmosphere. In our school we care deeply about the children who have been entrusted to us by their parents. We have high expectations for each and every child. Every child is encouraged to fully realise his/her potential - educationally, emotionally, spiritually and physically. We strive to foster independence, self-confidence, resilience and we encourage the children to be honest, hard-working and to do his/her best at all times. In keeping with our Catholic ethos we foster their spiritual development through a growing knowledge and love of God. We respect others and we care for those around us. We promote equality and we celebrate diversity, endeavoring to create a sense of inclusion and community where we honour, respect and value that diversity, while upholding the integrity and Catholic ethos of the school. Our school is a positive and happy environment where the children in our care feel safe, cared for and respected.

We acknowledge that parents are the primary carers of their children and as our partners in education we need and encourage your involvement and support. As teachers of your child, we have a positive and open attitude and wish to nurture an atmosphere of mutual trust, respect and understanding. We recognise that each child is unique and it is our hope and vision to cherish, nurture and develop that uniqueness.

NATURE OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

As a Catholic school, religious education is a core subject on the school curriculum and an integral part of the ethos of the school. Religious education is provided for children in accordance with the doctrines, practices and traditions of the Catholic Church that derives its trust and ultimate foundation from the person of Christ. Such education has nothing in common with indoctrination that amounts to teaching a child a religious way of behaving and believing. This type of teaching deliberately harms children by undermining their natural ability to reason. In contrast Harold's Cross NS is committed to the deepest respect for both faith and reason as they contribute significantly to the formation of rational and mature citizens of democratic society.

Three types of learning in religious education are evident in our school.

- 1. 'Learning into religion'**

Children are provided with religious instruction and experience, such as prayer and sacramental participation that will help them to grow into their faith and in their understanding of the Catholic tradition.

- 2. 'Learning about religion'**

While particular focus is given to Christianity, children are exposed to a broad range of religious traditions and to the non-religious interpretation of life. Such a broad exposure seeks to develop in pupils, powers of acceptance, tolerance and mutual understanding and

the skills needed to engage in meaningful dialogue with those of other, or of no religious traditions.

3. 'Learning from religion'

Children evaluate both *what* has been learned and *how* it has impacted on their daily lives. Children are invited to learn from what they are discovering.

Religious education that the school provides is open to, and inclusive of all children, regardless of their faith background and these children are invited to participate in and engage with the religious education programme in various ways.

AIMS OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION:

Our religious education endeavours to:

- Develop in children a knowledge and understanding of their own religious tradition and beliefs, with respect for religious traditions and beliefs of others.
- Help children grow in their identity as persons created in the image and likeness of God.
- Help children respond to God's love through love: by showing love for themselves, for each other, for God and all of creation.
- Deepen in children an understanding of what it means to be a disciple of Jesus and how to participate in the mission of the Church.
- Foster awareness in children of shared values such as justice, peace, the dignity of the human person.
- Heighten children awareness, empathy and compassion for local needs/issues and global problems.
- Prepare children for the sacraments of First Penance, First Communion and Confirmation.
- Give children accurate, clear, age and ability appropriate information.
- Prepare children for living in community with people of their own and other faith traditions and none.

The religious education policy allows each member of the staff to reflect on what it means to be a Catholic School and to articulate a commitment to it.

CURRICULUM:

The Catholic characteristic ethos underpinning Harold's Cross NS permeates the whole school day. Thirty minutes in each school day is devoted to religious education as well as time for prayer; *morning and evening prayer, grace before and after meals* and other related religious activities.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION PROGRAMME FOR JUNIOR & SENIOR INFANTS

Grow in Love

The aim of the *Grow in Love* programme 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.*

Content of the *Grow in Love* programme:

My family.	The Holy Family.	Our World.
Advent and Christmas	Stories about Jesus.	Holy Week and Easter.
The Church.	Water/ Food.	Baptism.
We Give Thanks - The Mass.		

Text Book: *Grow in Love* Teacher's Manual. Children's Book.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION PROGRAMME FOR FIRST & SECOND CLASS

Grow in Love

The aim of the *Grow in Love* programme is: to help children to prepare for the Sacrament of Reconciliation and Holy Communion.

Content of the *Grow in Love* programme:

Called and Chosen. Jesus etc.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION PROGRAMME FOR THIRD AND FOURTH CLASS

Grow in Love

The aim of the *Grow in Love* programme 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*

Content of the *Grow in Love* programme:

God Has a Plan for Us.	God's Promise to Abram
God's Covenant with Abraham.	The Bible,
Our Sacred Scripture.	The New Testament

Text Book: *Grow in Love* Teacher's Manual. Children's Book.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION PROGRAMME FOR FIFTH AND SIXTH CLASS

Grow In Love

The aim of the *Grow in Love* Programme is: *to help children grow and develop into healthy mature adults, capable of realising their full potential as human beings, created in the image and likeness of God.*

Fifth and Sixth Class

Prophets.	Mysteries of Light.	Christian Faith.
Community, Morality and Love.	Commandments and the Beatitudes.	

Advent/Christmas.

Lent/Holy Week/Easter.

Pentecost.

The Holy Spirit.

Confirmation: History and Ceremony.

Sacraments of the Church.

Rituals and Symbols.

Text Book: Grow in Love Teacher's Book and Pupil's Book.

HOMEWORK POLICY:

The school staff holds a strong belief that families should be given the opportunity to be involved in their children's religious education, therefore, home work is sent home one night, per week. The Home Links are a very important part of the religion programme as they involve the parents in the development of their child's faith.

WITHDRAWAL FROM RELIGIOUS EDUCATION CLASSES

Harold's Cross NS respects and acknowledges the rights of parents/guardians. Among our school community, we have many children who do not come from Catholic families, who may be atheists or have a different faith. In many cases these parents have opted for this type of education and welcome the ethos and values which are part and parcel of our school. However some parents may require their son/daughter to be excluded from religious education. The manner in which such an 'opt out' is facilitated in our school is related to available resources within the school and to the extent that it complies with the school's policies on curriculum, supervision and child safeguarding.

Two options that the school provides for students when a request for 'opt out' from religious education is made include:

1. Staying within the classroom following an educationally appropriate activity, *for example*, reading a novel, completing project work etc.
2. Parents provide supervision within the school for their child during Religious Education where alternative supervision is not feasible.

THE PROCEDURE IN PLACE TO FACILITATE A REQUEST FOR WITHDRAWAL FROM RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IS AS FOLLOWS:

- A written request to meet with the principal must be made by parents to discuss the matter. A meeting will then be arranged with the parent to discuss how the request may be accommodated by the school. The principal answers specific question parents/guardians may have on the content of the programme and explains the options the school can provide for children when a request for 'opt out' from religious education is made.
- For those parents who have no objection to their child taking part in the religion programme (as long as they don't participate in prayer or learn the dogma) this will be facilitated. Parent will sign a statement to that effect.
- If a child is withdrawn for learning support, such withdrawal will take place **if possible** when religion class is scheduled.

If this is not possible –

- Pupils will engage in a range of activities organised by the teachers.

- If the teaching of religion is scheduled for the last class of the day, the parent may collect the child early from the school.
- If parents wish, they may withdraw their child from the religion class for its duration and supervise the child themselves.

If and when pupils have to attend Church services, non-Catholics will be dispersed to other classes within the school.

Meeting with the Principal enables parents/guardians to make an informed decision in regards to withdrawal for religious education.

STAFF SUPPORT AND DEVELOPMENT:

Effective religious education does not just happen spontaneously or accidentally. The very nature of the religious education class requires teachers to keep upgrading and enhancing their teaching skills and resources.

Support and development for the staff are as follows:

- Management is supportive of all religious education in and out of the classroom.
- All teachers are encouraged to attend an in-service of the new 'Grow in Love' programme if available.
- Magazines and articles relating to religion topics are circulated among the staff.
- Throughout the school year guest speakers talk to the staff on such topics as, Wellness, Mental Health, Bullying etc.

Outside support is received from the:

- Diocesan Advisor.
- Trustees of the School.
- Boards of Management.
- Diocesan Clergy.

LITURGY:

All staff are encouraged to participate in the Liturgical Life of the School.

To ensure that significant liturgical events are celebrated and recognised throughout the School year the following take place:

- Opening of the School Year Service.
- Advent and Lenten Services of Reconciliation.
- Ash Wednesday Service.
- Carol Service.
- Catholic School's Week.
- Morning Prayer reflective of the significance of the time of year. Feast days, Holy days.
- Sixth Class Graduation Service
- Class Masses – Each year group from first upwards has one class Mass in the academic year.
- Particular celebration associated with the school.
- Whole School remembrance prayer for the dead in November.

SACRED SPACE:

A distinctive feature of the school is a sacred space in the front foyer of the school. The space is decorated to reflect the changing liturgical calendar and can contain quotations from Sacred Scripture and other writers, coloured fabric and symbols.

RELIGIOUS IMAGERY:

Images and symbols are placed in prominent areas around the school. The images and symbols include:

- A Crucifix in each classroom.
- A Bible.
- Advent wreath.
- Lenten, Holy Week and Easter displays.
- A Holy Water Font.
- Statue of our Lady
- A crib.
- Posters.

The Advent wreath, crib, Lenten, Holy Week and Easter display are accompanied with a brief explanation.

OUTREACH PROGRAMMES:

Peace and Justice is an integral part of the religious education programme. Children are encouraged to empathise and show compassion for local and global justice issues.

- Trócaire information and boxes during the season of Lent.
- Class projects on local and global issues.
- Carol singing in the community at Christmas.
- Shoe Box Appeal.
- Display Board with newspaper articles and pictures featuring local and global issues.

CHAPLAINCY SERVICES:

The role of the sacramental chaplain, the Parish Priest, is to:

- Encourage School-Parish links.
- Be a support for the principal and staff.
- Encourage the implementation of the Liturgical Calendar.
- Get to know staff by visiting staffroom at morning tea or lunch time.
- Visit each classroom to meet the children and to chat with them about their religious education programme.
- Provide sacramental celebrations.

PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT:

There is an opportunity for parents to be informed about the content of the religious education programme through:

- Enrolment meeting for Junior infants.
- Sacramental Meetings.
- * Parent-Teacher Meetings.
- * Weekly homework.

Parents are involved in the religious education programme through:

- Liturgical celebrations.
- Catholic School's Week activities.
- Sixth Class Graduation

Roles & Responsibilities:

As a Catholic school this Religious Education Policy will impact on the whole school community. Support for the implementation of the policy will come from a number of groups.

Board of Management: Approves the policy and ensures its implementation and monitors its review.

Principal and Deputy Principal: Supports the procedures of the policy and ensures its effective implementation.

School Staff: Embraces and safeguards the ethos of the school and supports the cross culture of religious education.

Classroom Teachers: Implement and reviews the policy in order to ensure a high standard and effective delivery of religious education.

Sacramental Chaplain: Assists with the implementation and review of the policy and sacramental preparation.

Parent(s)/Guardian(s): Support the ethos of the School and the religious education programme and facilitates the faith formation of their children.

Children: Participate in the religious education programme and related activities.

DIOCESAN SUPPORT:

The Diocesan Advisor visits the School every two years either on a formal or informal basis.

The Diocesan Advisor provides:

- Encouragement through an opening school year letter to the staff and 'thank you' card at the end of the school year.
- Update on Diocesan and National events.
- Advice on policy and other related activities.
- Support by visiting the classroom and meeting the teachers and children and attending School celebrations.
- In-service on the new Religious Education programme '*Grow in Love*'.
- Support for the School when there is a critical event in the School.

Policy Monitoring:

The policy is reviewed every three years or in light of new directives/legislation presented by the department and or Patron Body.

Document Control Table	
Document Type:	Policy
Version:	01
Drawn By:	Teachers, Parents and Board of Management
Written Date:	May, 2020

Approved By:	Board of Management on June 24 th , 2020,
Signed By	Denis Smith
Effective Date:	September 2020