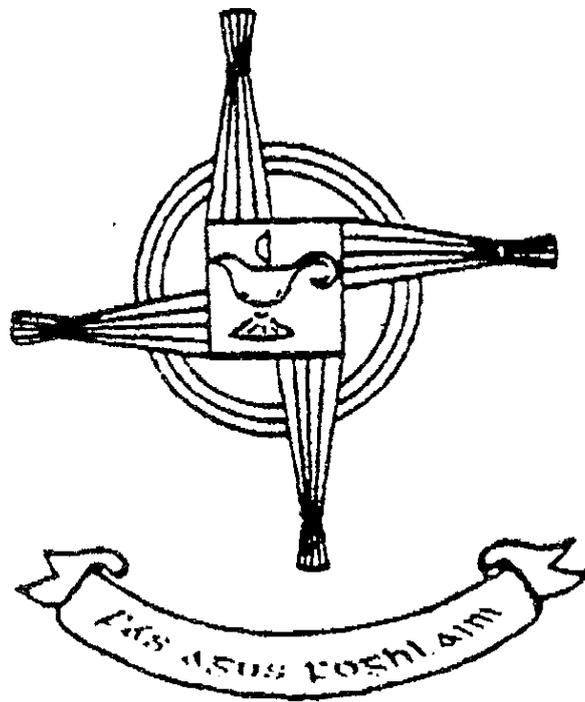


School Ethos and Religious Education Policy



Scoil Mhuire Lourdes

Ethos of Scoil Mhuire Lourdes

The 'ethos' of Scoil Mhuire Lourdes encompasses collective attitudes, beliefs, core values, traditions, aspirations and goals. These are reflected in the actual practices which are carried out in the school on a daily, weekly and yearly basis. While it is impossible to outline all aspects of the school 'ethos', the following characteristics are experienced and promoted as essential elements in the establishment of a supportive and positive 'ethos'.

- In Scoil Mhuire Lourdes, where the ethos is that of a Catholic school, religious instruction, in accordance with the doctrine and tradition of the Catholic Church is part of the education given to children who belong to that Church.
- The pupils are prepared for the reception of the sacraments of First Confession, First Holy Communion and Confirmation, in accordance with arrangements in the diocese.
- Prayer is a feature of the school day.
- The school aims at promoting the full and harmonious development of all aspects of the pupil, including her relationship with God, with other people and with the environment.
- The Principal and teaching staff aim at maintaining high professional standards and creating a safe and happy environment.
- A spirit of mutual respect is promoted within the school community. Pupils are drawn by example and teaching to appreciate and respect people of different religious affiliations and of different nationalities.
- Close contact is maintained between school and home. Parents / guardians and teachers support one another and collaborate with one another in leading the children to the fullness of their potential at the different stages.

Ancillary staff in the school are highly esteemed and respected. It is recognised that their work makes a valued contribution to the process of education.

Religious Education Policy

Introduction

Scoil Mhuire Lourdes is a Catholic primary school established under the patronage of the Bishop of Kildare and Leighlin. It promotes values and is committed to the holistic development of both pupils and staff. The school endeavours to recognise, develop and appreciate the dignity and uniqueness of each child in a happy, caring and safe environment where respect for both people and the environment is central; thus enabling children to strive with confidence towards their full potential animated by the Gospel spirit of freedom and charity.

Vision

“Catholic schools seek to reflect a distinctive vision of life and a corresponding philosophy of education.” (Vision 08 – A Vision for Catholic Education in Ireland – Irish Catholic Bishops’ Conference). The main objective of Scoil Mhuire Lourdes is to provide primary education for children from Junior Infants to Sixth Class. The school is also committed to the professional and personal development of its pupils in a community environment. It aims at promoting the full and harmonious development of all aspects of the pupil: intellectual, physical, cultural, moral and spiritual, including a living relationship with God and with other people. The school models and promotes a philosophy of life inspired by belief in God and in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Our Objectives

The primary objectives are aimed at embracing:

- A sense of fairness and good relationships with all other persons.
- Deep respect and cherishing for all people equally.
- Forgiveness and Reconciliation: A place where grudges are not held.
- Respect and Dignity: Deep intrinsic respect for all others.
- Affirmation and Tolerance: That we speak to, react to and act towards others, respectful of their dignity.
- Personal Faith Formation: Formal prayer, religion lessons, celebrations of sacraments as well as recognition and appreciation of the liturgical seasons of the year.
- Belonging: That all experience a sense of belonging and contribute to the promotion of the Christian ethos of the school.
- Understanding: Teachers and pupils promote positive experiences of school and foster healthy and wholesome relationships.

Core Values

A Catholic primary school is recognised as a national school by the Department of Education and Skills. Scoil Mhuire Lourdes is a faith school that expresses a set of core values that can be described as human, religions, Christian and Catholic. The Board of Management, the Principal and the staff, working with the Patron, the parents and the Parish, model a living human – religious – Catholic education tradition to nurture the faith of Catholic pupils in a manner that is welcoming to and inclusive of the presence of pupils committed to other religious faiths or human traditions.

Religious education is a core subject but in the Catholic school the curriculum for it is specified by the Patron. The programme approved by the Catholic Bishops of Ireland is currently the Grow in Love Programme. In recognition of these core values of the Catholic school education, Scoil Mhuire Lourdes 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.

Other Religious Denominations

Subject to the terms of the 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. Consultation with parents of these pupils takes place on enrolment. Each child is welcome to attend and benefit from the Catholic religious' education programme. If parents do not wish for this to happen they are invited to meet with the Principal to see if an accommodation can be reached.

Parents are welcome to view the religious programme taught. 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.

Promoting and Nurturing a Catholic Ethos

The Board of Management and the teachers have adopted the Grow in Love Programme approved and recommended by the Irish Hierarchy for use in Catholic Schools. The programme incorporates the recommended approach to religious education for the reception of the sacraments of Reconciliation, Eucharist and Confirmation and other religious educational curricular activities.

The programme is timetabled each day for one half-hour. A Christian ethos however permeates **all aspects** of school curricular activities.

Whole School Dimension

There is a spirit of prayer in the school not just related and taught to the children, but is seen to be lived and valued experience for the teachers. In each classroom the aim is to create an atmosphere of openness, forgiveness and understanding and above all love. A sense of awe and wonder at the goodness, beauty and love of God is developed in the child.

Meaningful icons, pictures, artwork and sacred spaces are on display throughout the school building.

The major Catholic, significant and local feast days are celebrated appropriately. They are marked with prayer services and with the aid of artwork, signs and symbols, which are displayed in the classroom and throughout the school.

These include:

- Hallowe'en – All Saints, In November We Remember
- 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 forgiveness
- Holy Week – Reflection on the way of the Cross
- Easter – symbols of the new life of the resurrection
- Pentecost – artistic depiction of the coming of the Holy Spirit

Liturgical and Eucharistic celebrations are held on significant days of the school including:

- The opening and closing of the school year
- Feast days
- Christmas prayer service
- Times of trauma or crisis and for other occasions, which from time to time are considered appropriate to celebrate or commemorate.
- School assemblies, which incorporate thematic religious subject matter, appropriate to age, season and circumstances.

The pupils of the school also participate:

- At the celebration of the First Eucharist and Confirmation, attending Mass in the Church to prepare for these sacraments
- School masses at the beginning and the end of the academic year and to acknowledge and pray during feasts e.g St. Brigids Day
- Other liturgical celebrations in co-operation with the wider community of the parish including altar servers and members of the choir and other participatory roles in the Parish Eucharist.

A Collaborative and Partnership Approach

The Catholic tradition has always emphasised that parents are the primary educators and that the role of the school is to work in partnership with the family / home. Parents have a right to a free choice of school in a manner that reflects their religious convictions. The Board of Management will endeavour to promote and encourage close links with the parish and the wider community.

Connecting with our Parish

The Catholic education offered in Scoil Mhuire Lourdes is conducted in collaboration with the children's parents and the local parish. The school perceives its role as being supportive of the role of parents and parish. The priest provides support, expertise and assistance in the religious formation of the children and in a collaborative manner, with the other stakeholders and partners in education.

These include providing opportunities for:

- Celebrating the Sacrament of Reconciliation prior to Christmas and Easter and the conclusion of the school year
- Informal lessons / talks and interaction with pupils on faith issues and moral development
- Praying with the pupils
- Prayer Service i.e. Ash Wednesday and St. Brigid's Day
- Faith talks for parents in preparation for First Communion and Confirmation / graduation as well as including other liturgical services.
- Training and organising altar servers, choirs, readers, offertory bearers and assisting in other participatory roles in the liturgical life of the Parish.

Spiritual Formation of Teachers

The spiritual nourishment of teachers is acknowledged by the Board of Management to be an integral part of the religious education programme undertaken by the school, and this is fostered where appropriate.

Implementing a Religious Educational and Faith Formation Programme

Teaching Methodologies include:

- Study of the Grow in Love Programme, Teacher's Guide
- Interactive learning
- Giving children prayerful and faith formation experiences that are meaningful and relevant
 - Sacramental and para-liturgies
 - Use of meditation in prayer
 - Drama, pageants and role play on thematic Christian values

- Questions and answers which encourage children to use their own words
- Vocal, spontaneous and non-vocal prayer

Success Criteria

We will know this policy is operating effectively in our school if:

There is an acknowledged sense of God, faith formation, a sense of prayer and worship within the school community and environment.

There is a well behaved school community where respect for the dignity and uniqueness of all school staff and pupils is evident and upheld at all times.

There is evidence of a committed parental interest and involvement in the implementation of the religious education programme, particularly in the home environment.

There are recognisable links which forge strong bonds between parish / home / school.

Children can speak confidently and lovingly of their faith and its relation to the living of their lives.

Conclusion

The Board of Management, in consultation with the Principal and the school staff, are responsible for facilitating the smooth and effective implementation of this policy.

Ratification of this Policy

The Board of Management ratified this policy document on:

This policy will be reviewed from time to time and may be amended whenever the need arises or when circumstances require it.

_____ Chairperson

_____ Date

