



**St. Brigid's B.N.S.,**  
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## **Religious Education Policy**

### **Introductory Statement**

St. Brigid's B.N.S. Religious Education Policy was formulated by the school staff in consultation with the Parish Priest and Board of Management in the school year of 2017 – 2018 and reviewed in 2021.

### **Introduction**

#### **General Information about the school**

St. Brigid's B.N.S. is an all-boys primary school with pupils from Junior Infants to 6<sup>th</sup> Class with an enrolment of approx. 370 pupils. The school was founded in 1974 and is located in St. Brigid's Parish, Killester in the Dublin Diocese. The school Patron is the Catholic Archbishop of Dublin, Dermot Farrell. St. Brigid's Parish Church is situated opposite the school on the Howth Road. Fr. Liam Ó Cuív is the parish priest since 2016. Fr. Alex Stenson, the previous parish priest serves as the patron nominee on the school's Board of Management. (November 2015-2021).

St. Brigid's B.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. A Christian ethos permeates the school and the life of the school.

### **Aim of Religious Education Policy**

The aim of the Religious Education curriculum 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.

The curriculum distinguishes four interrelated strands of Christian Faith, The Word of God, Liturgy/Prayer and Christian Morality. The strands overlap and interact to form a holistic learning experience for the child.

Christian Faith: Teaching and learning in this strand assists children to become religiously literate in key truths, doctrines and practices of the Catholic religious tradition.

The Word of God: In this strand children are introduced to an age-appropriate way to Sacred Scripture in the life of the Church.

Liturgy and Prayer: Children are encouraged to engage with liturgical signs, symbols and rituals which nurture their relationship with God as Father, Son and Spirit, and to develop their capacity for personal prayer and for participation in the liturgy of the Church.

Christian Morality: The teaching and learning in this strand helps children to grow in awareness of their identity as persons created in the image and likeness of God and called to live in loving, respectful, relationship with God, other human persons and the whole of creation. The children are introduced to Jesus as the example for living an ethical life and are formed in gospel values and in love of God and neighbour.

### **General Information**

#### a) Diocesan Information

**Diocese:** Dublin

**Archbishop:** Archbishop Diarmuid Martin

**Episcopal Vicar for Education:** Msgr. Dan O'Connor

**Diocesan Advisers:** Sr. Anne Neylon, Breda Holmes, Sr. Maureen Matthews

#### b) Parish Information

**Parish:** St. Brigid's Killester

**Parish Priest:** Fr. Liam Ó Cuív

**Chairperson of Parish Pastoral Council:** Tom O'Brien

#### c) School Information

**Patron of School:** Archbishop Dermot Farrell

**Chaplain:** Fr. Liam Ó Cuív

**Board of Management:** Sean Moran (Chairperson & Archbishop's Nominee)  
Msgr. Alex Stenson (Archbishop's Nominee)  
Nuala Cullen (Principal)  
Fionnuala Brennan (Teachers' Representative)  
Laura Showlin (Parents' Representative)

Alan Lynam	(Parents' Representative)
Brenda Daly	(Wider Community Representative)
Niamh Bray	(Wider Community Representative)

## **Materials**

- The *Catholic Preschool and Primary Religious Education Curriculum for Ireland* is the foundation document for all Religious Education.
- Each classroom has a 'Grow in Love Teacher Resource Kit' i.e. 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. Classes where 'Grow in Love' has been introduced bring home the pupil's book weekly and complete the At Home page with parents. The pupil's book 3<sup>rd</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup> class is included in our Book Rental Scheme.
- There is a set of Bibles available for the 5<sup>th</sup> & 6<sup>th</sup> classes to use.
- There is a set of The Gospel of Luke books available for 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> class use.
- 2<sup>nd</sup> class My First Holy Communion & Penance  
Thumb (Veritas)
- 6<sup>th</sup> class My Confirmation Year (Veritas)  
My Confirmation - Yes! I will be your Witness (Fallons)
- Additional Religious Education resources are placed in the school library or Sacred Space.
- Each classroom has a cross/crucifix, Bible and statue/image of Our Lady
- 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 (CSW) from the Diocesan Education Office are available to the school each January and are accessible for teachers to support RE and CSW events.
- Monthly Liturgical Planning Guide from Diocesan Advisers.

## **Timetabling**

Our school believes that religious education is a core subject in a Catholic primary school. It is the foundation of the entire educational process. This means that

- Religious education is timetabled in each classroom for the designated time of 2 ½ hours per week
- Religious education is included in all teachers Fortnightly Notes and Cúntas Míosuil.

## **Symbols**

- A schedule for Catholic Schools is on display in the reception area and in the Principal's office.
- The school's main reception area has a themed mural and crib displayed at Christmas and an 'In Loving Remembrance' tree during November.
- A Sacred Space has been developed in a central area of the school for all classes to visit and have prayerful reflection. There is a Crucifix, Catholic Children's Bible, Candle, Holy Water Font and St. Brigid's Cross in this area. Other symbols pertaining to the Liturgical year are also displayed e.g. Advent wreath, a Crib.

- Themed fabric wall hangings are displayed every month.

### **Prayer Space**

Each class has 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. Brigid's is supported by prayers as follows:

- As pupils progress through the class levels teachers encourage different forms of prayer i.e. vocal prayer word, meditative prayer and contemplative prayer.
- Each class level has a list of formal prayers to be learned in each class.
- Teachers seek to create a prayerful atmosphere in class for prayer i.e. 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 and to respect and enjoy prayerful silences.
- Children contribute to their classroom Prayer Space based on the themes of the Grow In Love Programme.

### **Prayer**

Prayers recited throughout the day include;

- The Sign of the Cross
- Morning Prayer
- Evening Prayer
- Grace Before Meal
- Grace after Meals
- Our Father
- Hail Mary
- Glory be to the Father

(Senior classes may also recite prayers in Irish)

In addition to these prayers, the children also recite the following prayers.

Jl/SI	Angel Guardian Prayer Simple Responses at Mass e.g. Amen, Thanks be to God, Alleluia
1 <sup>st</sup> /2 <sup>nd</sup>	Act of Sorrow (Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC) 1451 – 54) Prayer for Forgiveness Prayer after Forgiveness Journey Prayer Prayer before Communion Prayer after Communion The Rosary: Joyful Mysteries (CCC 971) All Mass responses: Confiteor, Kyrie, Sanctus, Our Father, Agnus Dei, Lord I am not worthy

3 <sup>rd</sup> /4 <sup>th</sup>	<p>Comhartha na Croise  Glóir don Athair  Prayer to the Trinity  Gloria  St. Patrick's Breastplate  Apostle's Creed  Stations of the Cross (CCC 1674, 2699)  The Rosary: Sorrowful Mysteries (CCC 971)  Memorial Acclamations 2 and 3  The Angelus  Sanctus (Holy Holy)  Agnus Dei (Lamb of God)  All Mass responses</p>
5 <sup>th</sup> /6 <sup>th</sup>	<p>An Phaidir  Sé do Bheatha, a Mhuire  Hail Holy Queen  Benediction  Nicene Creed  Acts of Faith, Hope and Love (CCC 2098)  Prayers to the Holy Spirit  The Rosary: Glorious Mysteries and mysteries of light (CCC 971)  Memorare  Memorial Acclamations 1  Sung parts and Hymns for the Mass  Prayers for Confirmation ceremony  All Mass responses</p>

Special emphasis is put on hymns for Christmas and Liturgical and Sacramental services.

### **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 Holy Communion preparation is undertaken in 2<sup>nd</sup> Class with Confirmation Preparation undertaken in 6<sup>th</sup> Class.

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

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

(6<sup>th</sup> Class) Service of Light in March/April & Confirmation in May.

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

Children in 2<sup>nd</sup> class make their First Penance and First Holy Communion in St. Brigid's Church and children are thoroughly prepared in all aspects of this sacrament by the individual class teacher in keeping with the Catholic ethos of the school. Parents of children preparing for First Holy Communion are invited to participate in the 'Do This in Memory' programme led by parents under the direction of the school Chaplain. Parents are invited to attend meetings which are conducted in the week before the special Masses held during the liturgical year.

## **Sacrament of Confirmation**

6<sup>th</sup> class pupils celebrate the Service of Light and Confirmation in St. Brigid's Church. Children are prepared thoroughly in all aspects of these sacraments by the individual class teachers in keeping with the Catholic ethos of the school. Parents of children preparing for Confirmation are invited to participate in the 'You Shall Be My Witnesses' programme with their children including special community Masses during the year. Meetings are held during the liturgical year which parents are invited to attend. All 6<sup>th</sup> class pupils attend a Confirmation retreat in the third term. The parish priest also arranges the Sacrament of Reconciliation for 6<sup>th</sup> class pupils before Confirmation.

## **Implementation of Religious Education throughout the school year:**

Religious education is integrated with all aspects of the curriculum especially the Arts, English, Gaeilge and SPHE. Morning and evening prayers are recited in all classes with specific prayers chosen by the class teacher. A variety of feast days are celebrated in school such as Christmas, Easter, Lent, Shrove Tuesday, Ash Wednesday and our patron saint, St. Brigid. Junior Infants – 1<sup>st</sup> class attend a prayer service in the hall, while 2<sup>nd</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup> class go to Mass. Catholic Schools Week is celebrated every year at the end of January. Reflections are read daily over the intercom system to the whole school community, followed by a short prayer. The role of grandparents as passers on of the faith is acknowledged when grandparents are invited in to classrooms during Catholic Schools Week.

Every member of the teaching staff has a recognised Certificate in Religious Studies. Every effort is made that newly qualified teachers do not teach a sacramental class. All staff support the class teacher of each sacrament e.g. assisting in art work, supervising trips to the church, preparing booklets, practising prayers & hymns, preparing the school choir. Each sacrament is a whole school celebration and whenever possible staff attend the actual sacramental celebration in the church.

Fr. Liam visits the school regularly. No specific arrangements are in place as parish priests are very busy and come when they have a free moment but in general Fr. Liam visits every fortnight. He visits all classes but spends additional time with the sacramental classes.

Missionary awareness and charity support are actively encouraged in St. Brigid's B.N.S.

- One of the teachers is the founder and leader of the charity Lámha Suas – a charity based in Uganda, which aims to support the education of girls and young women.
- St. Brigid's B.N.S. is involved in a School Twinning Programme where the 5<sup>th</sup> & 6<sup>th</sup> class pupils of St. Brigid's B.N.S. write to their peers in a Ugandan School each month, to learn more about each other's lives – how they are similar as well as how they differ.
- An annual relay race is held every year involving two different class grouping each year. The money raised goes to support Lámha Suas programmes.
- Uganda Week – Each class is taught about an aspect of life in Uganda e.g. family life, pastimes, agriculture. All the work is put on display in the hall and all classes come down to see their own work and everyone else's. This work is often entered in competitions run by Trócaire and Irish Aid to encourage children to learn about global development.
- Volunteer Programme – to date 3 teachers from St. Brigid's have volunteered for a 5 week placement, teaching and living in rural Uganda.

As children in St. Brigid's witness the active, concrete involvement of the school staff in charity support, their awareness of global issues is heightened.

- Trócaire boxes are distributed by teachers at the beginning of Lent. This leads to an opportunity to highlight social injustice and global poverty awareness.

#### **Other RE related activities include**

- Staff Development on aspects of RE are facilitated through CPH (when appropriate)
- School Staff & BOM are notified of the date of the annual Diocesan School Mass organised by the Archdiocese.
- Catholic pupils in 4<sup>th</sup> class provide the choir for the Communion and Confirmation ceremonies and are prepared by their teachers annually.
- A monthly liturgical planning guide is e-mailed to the school from the Diocesan Office and all teachers receive a hard copy.

#### **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.

- Parents are invited to attend the Christmas Shows in the school and parish church.
- St. Brigid's Day Mass, 6<sup>th</sup> class Graduation ceremony
- The school newsletter and school website provides regular updates on aspects of R.E. Education and sacramental preparation in the school.

Parents are encouraged to support their child's religious education through the following;

- Completing the weekly at home pages from the Grow In Love RE Programme
- Attending Christmas Shows in the school hall/church
- Attending parent/teacher meetings and sacramental preparation meeting
- Attending sacramental celebrations
- Joining the community at Mass on holydays and feast days
- Celebrating the Graduation Ceremony with 6<sup>th</sup> class pupils
- Organising receptions in the school hall or community centre after the First Holy Communion & Confirmation ceremonies for the families and pupils involved.
- Supporting the Catholic Ethos of the school

#### **Pupils of Other Traditions**

Pupils of other faiths are very welcome at St. Brigid's B.N.S. When they enrol it is clearly stated that they are enrolling in a school with a strong Catholic ethos and that this ethos of caring and consideration for others permeates all in the community. Children are not removed from class during the religion lesson but can work at other curricular tasks. Children of other faiths and their families are most welcome to join their class at any sacramental or liturgical celebration.

- The school arranges for supervision of these pupils not partaking in Sacramental preparation etc. by other teachers during church visits.
- Pupils of other traditions who are in the sacramental classes are invited to attend the reception held after the First Holy 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 from other religious traditions or life stances in our school.

### **Roles and Responsibilities:**

#### **Staff**

- Deliver Grow In Love Programme
- Cooperate with Chaplain/Parish and Diocesan Advisers
- Avail of In-Service support
- Actively support the ethos of the school
- Religious co-ordinator supports the Principal

#### **Parents**

- Support the school during times of sacramental preparation and assist at home with Religious Education homework
- Avail of support at information meetings throughout the year
- Actively support the ethos of the school.

#### **Principal**

- Overall responsibility for maintaining and strengthening the Catholic ethos in the school
- Facilitate supportive interaction between all parties in implementing the programme
- Facilitate the formulation of the Religious Education Policy
- Facilitate the prayer life of the school throughout the liturgical year, e.g. prayer at assemblies, special feast days etc...
- Encourage the use of sacred spaces in classrooms and in school common areas, and to ensure the prominence of religious symbols and icons.
- Provide input on religious education at staff meetings, in order to maintain a conscious profile of the subject
- Facilitate links with chaplains and parish personnel
- Enable parents to take an active role in the religious education and formation of their children, e.g. use of home links in Grow In Love
- Liaise with Diocesan Advisers
- Distribute resources, e.g. Lenten and Advent resources, Trócaire boxes etc.

#### **Success Criteria:**

- An acknowledged sense of God, faith, prayer and worship within the school community
- Respect for all within the school community
- Parental interest



- Recognisable links between home, school and parish
- An outward-looking care for those less fortunate in society.

**Review:**

This policy will be reviewed every three years or as necessary.

**Ratification and Communication**

This policy is included on the St. Brigid's B.N.S. website at [www.stbridgetsbns.ie](http://www.stbridgetsbns.ie)

**This Policy was approved and ratified by the Board of Management on 24<sup>th</sup> March 2021.**

**Signed: *Seán Moran***  
**Chairperson of B.O.M.**

**Date: 24<sup>th</sup> March 2021**