SCOIL FIONNTÁIN NAOFA

Religious Education

Policy

Scoil Fionntáin Naofa,

Shanahoe,

Abbeyleix,

Co. Laois.

(Uimhir Rolla: 17489G)

Introduction:
This policy has been formulated by the Principal, the staff and Board of Management of the School in February 2023 and has been reviewed in February 2025.

The Aim of Religious Education:
The aim of Religious Education is to help children mature in relation to their spiritual, moral and religious lives, through their encounter with, exploration and celebration of their Catholic faith[1].

Mission Statement:
Scoil Fionntáin Naofa, Shanahoe is a Roman Catholic school under the patronage of the Diocese of Kildare and Leighlin. The school sees itself as being an integral part of the parish of Raheen, and in partnership with parents, the church and the wider school community, the school seeks to nurture the Catholic faith in the school through Religious Education and preparation for the Sacraments. In Scoil Fionntáin Naofa, Shanahoe we strive to be a warm and welcoming place, which is respectful and accommodating of difference and diversity in terms of race, culture, religion, gender and ability.

In Scoil Fionntáin Naofa, Shanahoe, we welcome and cherish each individual child in our care. The school recognises the dignity and value of each person made in the image and likeness of God. In Scoil Fionntáin Naofa, Shanahoe, we endeavour to create a safe, happy, positive, stimulating, orderly, inclusive and productive learning environment, where high quality teaching and learning will flourish. This is reflected in the organisation and practices of our school and in its admission and policy documents. Our school motto is *'Mol an Óige agus Tiocfaidh Sí'*.

Vision Statement:
In **Scoil Fionntáin Naofa, Shanahoe** we work diligently to ensure that our learning environment is characterised and underpinned by high quality teaching practices and stimulating, worthwhile and positive learner experiences for all of our pupils. We aim to ensure that all pupils in the school have access to a broad, balanced and relevant curriculum that is responsive to individual learner needs. In addition, we strive to ensure that all pupils have access to a range of co-curricular and extra-curricular activities, in order to further enhance and develop their learning, knowledge and understanding, while simultaneously developing their abilities and skills across a variety of different domains.

One of our primary aims is to encourage and enable all of the pupils in the school to strive to be the very best that they can be and to reach their full potential in all domains of their lives, including the intellectual, academic, spiritual, social, emotional, imaginative, aesthetic, moral and physical. We set high expectations for pupil learning and achievement commensurate with ability levels. We build on and capitalise on pupils' strengths and abilities and identify, monitor and address areas for improvement. In **Scoil Fionntáin Naofa, Shanahoe** we endeavour to be a school that will take all pupils from where they are at, to where they ought to be, in terms of

[1] Catholic Pre-School and Primary Religious Education Curriculum for Ireland page 31

ensuring that they are reaching their full potential in all areas of their lives: 'A ship in harbour is safe but that's not what ships are built for' (J.A Shedd).

In **Scoil Fionntáin Naofa, Shanahoe,** we strive to create a fully inclusive and supportive learning environment, where all pupils are given the opportunity to access, benefit from and experience success in and with the curriculum and other school based programmes and initiatives. We put adequate provisions and supports in place for pupils with Special Educational Needs.

As part of our vision in **Scoil Fionntáin Naofa, Shanahoe**, we endeavour to equip the pupils with the knowledge and skill set to face life confidently, find fulfilment for themselves, achieve their full potential, be respectful towards others and have integrity in an ever-changing world. We actively promote and teach values such as tolerance, compassion, forgiveness, justice, courtesy, honesty and respect. Essentially, we aim to promote the full, harmonious and holistic development of all of the pupils in our school, to set them on the right path for their future lives: 'Train up a child in the way he should go and when he is old he will not depart from it' (Proverbs 22:6).

In **Scoil Fionntáin Naofa, Shanahoe** we put a strong emphasis on pupil personal wellbeing and we strive to ensure that pupils feel safe, secure and content in the school environment and beyond.

Part of our vision is to foster and create an environment which is characterised by high levels of collaboration, collegiality, co-operation, reflection and discussion, between all partners, including pupils, staff members, Board of Management members, the parent body and the wider school community. Emanating from this, we strive to ensure that a culture of shared ownership and shared responsibility will be in existence within the school community. This in turn will enable a shared purpose and vision to be created, realised and 'lived out' for the overall improvement and development of the school as a whole. The school duly recognises the vital role of parents as the primary and natural educators of their children and to this end, parents are regarded as being key partners in the school. Parents are involved in and consulted with regard to various different aspects of school life. .

The Aim of the Religious Education Policy:
The purpose of this religious education policy is:

- To ensure that we strive to understand and promote religious education in a Catholic primary school as never simply one subject among many, but the foundation of the entire educational process. [2]
- To ensure that formal teaching in matters of belief, values and practice that equip children for a free and intelligent expression of personal faith within the family, Church and wider society is provided. *(based on Share the Good News 39)*
- To appreciate the richness of all religious traditions, especially those present in our school community, and to provide a framework to encounter these traditions.

[2] Catholic Pre-School and Primary Religious Education Curriculum for Ireland page 12

- To provide appropriate religious education for the different levels of faith commitment that we encounter in our classrooms
- To lead to a greater degree of clarity in respect of aims, procedures and roles for RE in the school.
- To assist all members of staff in the teaching of Religion.
- To consider strategies that respond to the needs of children of different faiths and other stances for living in terms of religious education.

About our Catholic School:
Our school is a Catholic school under the patronage of the Bishop of Kildare & Leighlin, Bishop Denis Nulty. Our school is in the parish of Raheen.

The Priests of the Parish: Father Paddy Byrne, Father Peter Medves

The Chaplain: Mary Delaney

The Religious Coordinator: Johnny Watson.

The members of the Board of Management:

1. Mr. Micheál Delaney (Chairperson/Patron's Nominee)
2. Ms. Sharon Drennan (Patron's Nominee)
3. Mr. Barry Whelan (Secretary/Principal)
4. Mr. Johnny Watson (Teacher Nominee)
5. Ms. Sonia McDonnell (Parent Nominee)
6. Mr. James Kirwan (Parent Nominee)
7. Ms. Mary Dunphy (Community Nominee)
8. Ms. Sarah-Louise Malone (Community Nominee)

School Environment:
Visitors, parents and children know that we are a Catholic School:

- The Schedule for the Catholic School is on display and visible to all visitors to the school. *(A copy is attached to this policy)*
- The Mission Statement for our school has been developed, is included with all welcome information for parents and staff and is regularly reviewed. (*A copy is attached to this policy))*
- There are religious symbols and visible signs of our Catholic faith in all public areas of our school.
- There is a Prayer Space that reflects the liturgical seasons in the entrance area of our school.
- There is ongoing communication with the local priest or parish worker who acts as chaplain to the school. Regular meetings and visits are scheduled throughout the school year
- Missionary awareness is highlighted through the school's support and engagement with charities such as *Trócaire, Children Helping Children* and other agencies
- Social justice awareness is highlighted through the school's support and engagement with charities such as the *Society of St. Vincent de Paul, Focus Ireland* and other agencies

Prayer in our School:

- Religiously themed assemblies, communal prayer time and liturgical celebrations are timetabled during the school year *e.g. beginning and ending of school year Mass or Prayer Service, Advent and Lent celebrations, Catholic Schools Week celebration*
- Important Feast Days are celebrated throughout the Church Year
- All meetings in the school begin and end with prayer. *The Prayer for School Meetings booklet is used as a resource for this prayer time.*
- Staff are offered opportunities for prayerful reflection, retreat and personal faith development on a regular basis.
- There is time for prayer in every classroom at the beginning of the day, before and after lunch and before the children leave at home time.
- Children know their formal prayers and Mass responses as indicated by the curriculum; Level 1 p59; Level 2 page 74; Level 3 p 94; Level 4 page 120.
- The rosary is prayed with children at level 2, 3 and 4 as indicated by the curriculum
- Children have the opportunity to experience different forms of prayer, *e.g. meditation, contemplation, spontaneous prayer, Eucharistic Adoration*

Timetabling and Teaching Staff:

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.
- All teachers have a copy of the Pre-School and Primary Religious Education Curriculum for Ireland.
- All teachers have the relevant ***Grow in Love*** material needed to teach religious education in their classroom
- The Religious Education Coordinator distributes all resources and relevant communication from the Diocesan Advisor's office.
- Opportunities for ongoing professional development are regularly offered to teachers.

Classroom Environment:

- There is a Prayer Space in every classroom. This space reflects the movement of the liturgical seasons. It also contains samples of the children's work, religious symbols and God's creation.
- Every Prayer Space has a bible (Catholic Children's Bible)
- There are symbols of the Catholic faith in every classroom e.g. a Holy Water Font, religious icon or picture, cross or crucifix.

Classroom Teaching:

- In teaching the approved religious education programme for use in the diocese teachers are enabling children to learn the skills of moral, spiritual and religious literacy so that their understanding of their Christian faith is

constantly deepened and they develop a mature and informed response to God's call to relationship. The skills of religious literacy as defined by the curriculum are understanding, communicating, participating, and added to these are the further skills of spiritual literacy and inter-religious literacy. *(Curriculum page 35-37)* The following will help ensure that this can be achieved:

- All teachers have a recognised qualification in religious education[3]

The following approved textbooks/workbooks are in use in the school.

Junior/Senior Infants: Grow In Love

1st/2nd Class: Grow in Love

3rd/4th Class: Grow in Love

5th/6th Class: Grow in Love

Along with Grow in Love, the following programmes are used:

- In order to better help parents understand what their children are learning in religious education, a link with home is made on a weekly basis in each class. This is done by the Class Teacher.
- Children have an understanding and knowledge of their Christian faith through exploring the mystery of God, Jesus, the Holy Spirit and the Church/kingdom, through learning about creation, Mary, Eternal Life and other Religious Traditions and as indicated by the curriculum in Level 1 page 52 -54, Level 2 page 66-67, Level 3 page 84-88 and Level 4 page 106 -113.
- Each senior classroom has access to a set of bibles. [4]
- Children are familiar with bible stories, have an understanding and knowledge of Sacred Scripture, study the structure of the bible, know that Sacred Scripture is the revealed Word of God as indicated by the curriculum in Level 1 page 55, Level 2 page 71, Level 3 page 89 and Level 4 page 115-116
- Children have an understanding and knowledge of the liturgical life of the Church, the structure of the Mass, the seasons of the liturgical year, the way in which we meet Jesus in liturgy, sacraments and prayer, the seven sacraments of the Church as indicated in Level 1 page 58-80, Level 2 page 73-77, Level 3 page 93-99 and Level 4 page 119-125
- Children have an understanding and knowledge of human dignity, Church social teaching, RSE in a Christian context, the two-fold commandment and the ten commandments, they know that following Jesus is living according to Gospel values, that the Christian moral life is an expression and consequence

[3] The Certificate in Religious Studies

[4] The following bibles are most appropriate for use in the primary classroom: The Good News Bible, New Revised Standard Version, The Catholic Children's Bible, The Contemporary English Version

of relationship with God as indicated by the curriculum in Level 1 page 42, Level 2 page 78-80, Level 3 page 100 -102 and Level 4 page 126-130

- The faith formation dimension which forms the children's characters in the virtues and values of Jesus, supports their faith development and helps them to experience what it means to be a member of the Church is recognised and supported as an integral part of religious education. The faith formation goals in the curriculum p 134-143 support and reflect this dimension.
- Attention is given to integration of religious education across the primary school curriculum. St John Paul II gave expression to this when he stated that religious education will always seek to 'keep in touch with the pupil's knowledge and education; thus the gospel will impregnate the mentality of the student in the field of their learning and the harmonization of their culture will be achieved in the light of their faith[5]
- Children are provided with opportunities to learn by heart traditional prayers, Mass responses, hymns, biblical texts, faith words and faith summaries as outlined in the programme of religious education in use in the classroom.
- Provision for Religious Education is made for children with Special Educational Needs as indicated by the Special Education Curriculum Guidelines page 146-154

Sacramental Preparation and Celebration
General:

- Leadership in the school makes a conscious effort to ensure that teachers in sacramental classes are faith filled witnesses to the Christian life.
- Children are prepared for the sacraments of Reconciliation, Holy Communion and Confirmation in partnership with parents and parish.
- It is understood that children's understanding of these sacraments develops throughout their time in primary school and beyond.
- The school supports the ongoing conversation at parish and diocesan level about how best to prepare for and celebrate the sacraments of Reconciliation, Holy Communion and Confirmation
- The school works together with parents and parish to ensure that sacramental celebrations are authentic, sacred encounters with Jesus Christ
- Practice for sacramental celebrations are confined to no more than two hours of school time.

Celebrating Reconciliation for the first time:

- The celebration takes place in the local parish church preferably during the Lenten season
- Parents and other family members are invited to celebrate the sacrament with their children

Celebrating Holy Communion for the first time:

- Consideration is given to celebrating Holy Communion during a Sunday Mass or over a number of Sunday Masses

---

[5] Catechesi Tradendae 60

- Children sit with their parents
- Children are ministered to by the faith community on the day on which they receive Holy Communion for the first time. They are not called to minister. Their main task on the day is to be present to what is happening, to focus on the most important thing that will happen on the day, receiving Jesus, the Bread of Life.

Celebrating Confirmation:

- Teachers of Confirmation classes are aware of the Diocesan Guidelines for Confirmation and together with school and parish leadership ensure that these guidelines are followed
- Children are encouraged to write their letter to the bishop telling him why they would like to be confirmed.
- Children preparing for Confirmation are offered a retreat experience either before or after celebrating the sacrament
- Parish led preparation for the sacrament is offered. The programme or process in place is

Partnerships in Religious Education:

Home:

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

- Offering an input on religious education for parents of junior infants
- Making a link with home in religious education every week
- Encouraging parents to have a prayer space at home
- Ensuring parents know which prayers their children are learning and encouraging them to pray with their children at home
- Inviting parents to attend prayer services, assemblies Mass and other religious celebrations

Parish:

- Relationships between school and parish leadership are fostered and encouraged
- The school seeks a meeting with parish leadership at the beginning of each term to plan for visitation of classrooms, visits to the church, celebration of Feast Days, key liturgical celebrations in the school calendar, sacramental preparation and celebration
- The school supports the parish in offering parish led preparation for sacraments

Inclusion of Pupils of Different Faiths and Other Stances for Living:

Children of all faiths and different stances for living are welcome in our school. Our school is hospitable, open and inclusive. We continuously strive to best practice concerning the inclusion of pupils in our school. Our practice is founded on

principles of good communication, clarity on rights and responsibilities, right relationships, openness to dialogue and compromise and flexibility. [6]

- Our Admissions Policy and Mission Statement makes clear that we are a Catholic School under the patronage of the local Catholic bishop
- It is clear to parents enrolling their children that the Catholic ethos of our school permeates the whole school day and not just the formal religious education class
- Our Admissions Policy makes clear that we welcome diversity and inclusion and that we believe that the presence of children from diverse backgrounds enhance and enrich our school community.

Pre-Enrolment Meeting:

- A pre-enrolment meeting is held at which issues relating to ethos and formal religious education are discussed with prospective parents
- Parents are aware that there are prayers at assemblies, and at moments during the school day. It is made clear that for children of other faiths and different stances for living that these can be times for personal reflection.
- Parents are given an understanding of the nature of religious education in the Catholic Primary School. *(An example of what this might look like is available in Catholic Primary Schools in a Changing Ireland, p25)*
- Parents who have concerns about the content of the religious education programme are invited to meet with the principal/teacher/religious coordinator

Opting Out:

- If parents wish to have their children opt out of formal religious education the school offers some or all of the following options:
  - If alternative supervision is not possible; staying within the classroom and engaging in an educationally appropriate activity
  - Split timetabling of religious education across class streams
  - Supervised educational activity where a staff member is available
  - Withdrawal by parent of child for the purpose of receiving religious instruction elsewhere

Ongoing Communication, Opportunities for Inclusion and Parental Choice

- Parents whose children are of other faiths or different stances for living are made aware in advance of any religious events or celebrations.
- Children are always invited but not obliged to attend all Catholic religious celebrations in the school
- Individual children, with parental consent, may wish to participate in these celebrations by reading appropriate prayers and texts, participating in art or drama, being part of the choir, playing an instrument etc
- Parents are free to absent their child from school for the duration of these events. Consideration is given to the timing of these events.

---

[6] Forum on Patronage and Pluralism in the Primary Sector: Progress to Date and Future Directions, p19

- Care is taken that the time allotted to religious education is not exceeded during times of sacramental preparation
- Notice boards and school displays are used to make pupils feel welcome
- Celebrations of the different cultures present in the school are scheduled
- Reconciliation is a feature of daily life. Staff and children are encouraged to grow in appreciation of human dignity
- School assemblies acknowledge festivals associated with the other faith traditions present in the school.
- Children of different faiths are given the opportunity to explain their beliefs to other children
- Key materials are translated as resources allow.

Ratification and Communication:

The Board of Management ratified this plan on 12 March 2025.

Signed: Micheál Delaney

(Chairperson of the Board of Management)

Some Useful Texts

Catholic Preschool and Primary Religious Education Curriculum for Ireland (Veritas: Irish Episcopal Conference, 2015)

Share the Good News: National Directory for Catechesis in Ireland (Veritas: Irish Episcopal Conference, 2010)

The Irish Catholic Catechism for Adults (Veritas: Irish Episcopal Conference, 2014)

YOUCAT for Kids *(2018)*

Catholic Schools in a Changing Ireland: Sharing Good Practice on Inclusion of All Pupils (Catholic Schools Partnership: 2015)

The Value of Religious Education in our Primary Schools (Veritas: Irish Episcopal Conference 2017)

Religious Education at the Heart of our Primary Schools (Veritas: Irish Episcopal Conference 2017)

Recognition of Qualifications to teach Catholic Religious Education on the Island of Ireland (Veritas: Irish Episcopal Conference 2018)

Governance Manual for Primary Schools 2019-2023