

St Malachy's Boys' National School

Religion Policy

"Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these."

Matthew 19:14

Catholic schools are inclusive schools which are founded on the principles of equality, respect and love. The Catholic school has an integral part to play in helping children to experience God's love, understand the teachings of Jesus and to embrace a way of life rooted in a friendship with Him.

Pope Francis reminds us that the first proclamation that must ring out over and over in our Religious Education is that "Jesus Christ loves you; He gave His life to save you; and now He is living at your side every day to enlighten, strengthen and free you".

In the Catholic school the educational mission of the Church finds a particular important expression.

As with all schools, the Catholic school is concerned with the ongoing development of the potential of every individual. What is distinctive, however, in the Catholic school is that it is centred on the person of Jesus Christ, His teaching, and living a life that emulates these Christian values.

INTRODUCTORY STATEMENT

St. Malachy's Boys' school is a Catholic school under the patronage of the Archbishop of Armagh and is owned by the Dominican Order. It is managed by a Board of Management, elected according to the procedures agreed by the Partners in Education. The school has a long and proud history, having been founded by the Dominican Fathers in the 18th century. The first school, the Chapel School, was opened in 1827 in the Priory. In 1833, it became a fully recognised national school and moved to the building now used as the Rosary Centre. In 1900, it moved again to the site of the current Infants School. The present school was opened in 1953 on a site less than 150m from the original Chapel School. Our school is based on a strong Catholic ethos in the Dominican tradition. This ethos recognises the value and dignity of each pupil and all those working in the school community, and aims at promoting the full and harmonious development of all aspects of the person, including: a) relationship with God b) relationship with family c) relationship with teachers d) relationship with self e) relationship with others f) relationship with the environment. This ethos also acknowledges the cultural and religious values of all the pupils attending the school. The Catholic ethos is a guiding principle in the formulation and implementation of this RSE Policy. The school recognises that the parents are the primary educators of their children and we support them in that role. In the area of RSE, above all, the schools' role is subsidiary to that of the parents. We support and compliment their work.

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GENERAL INFORMATION

Diocesan Information

Diocese: **Archdiocese of Armagh**
School Patron: **Archbishop Eamon Martin**

School Information

Name: **St. Malachy's Boys' National School**
Principal: **Mr. Keith Farrell**
School Chaplain: **Fr. David Barrins OP**
BOM Chairperson: **Mr. Francis Curley**
Name of Designated Member of Board with specific responsibility for ethos: **Mr. Keith Farrell**
RE Co-ordinator: **Ms. Rachel McElroy**

AIM OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

The aim of Religious Education in the school is principally to help children mature in relation to their spiritual, moral and religious lives, through their encounter with exploration and celebration of the Catholic faith. Its main function is to explore step by step the mystery of Christ, the teaching of the Church and its application to daily life. It needs to be clearly focused and should encourage young people to be critical, analytical and reflective.

In a Catholic school, therefore, the Religious Education of pupils is accomplished in two equal and complementary ways:

- (i) through the totality of the experiences in the school and;
- (ii) through the Religious Education programme, *Grow in Love*.

A community hands on its faith and values most effectively by living them. Faith development should be promoted through the entirety of the school experience - including regular contact with the wider parish Dominican community. The celebration of the sacraments and assemblies centered on prayer - as much as by the learning which takes place in the formal Religious Education class.

Children will learn how to participate in prayer, they will know the traditional prayers by the year they receive Holy Communion for the first time and be competent in saying them. Children will develop virtue, personal and social responsibility, ecological consciousness and the ability to act in accordance with an informed conscience when making moral decisions. Children will develop Christian attitudes and values: for example: love, justice, compassion, truthfulness and respect and they will develop an understanding of what membership of the Church means.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION POLICY STATEMENT

At St Malachys BNS our mission is to develop as a community of faith and learning, providing the highest quality of education and offering formation through the promotion of the Gospel values, through celebration and worship and through service to the common good. We believe that faith in Jesus Christ is central to the full and harmonious development of the person: intellectual, physical, emotional, moral and spiritual. Our school provides Religious Education as a core subject in the curriculum. At St Malachy's BNS we value and promote the distinctive but complementary roles of home, school and church as together we work to promote the well-being and freedom of every person made in the image and likeness of God.

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RELIGIOUS EDUCATION CURRICULUM AND PROGRAMME

The *Catholic Preschool and Primary Religious Education Curriculum for Ireland*, published by the Irish Episcopal Conference in 2015, is the formal Religious Education curriculum for primary schools in the whole island of Ireland. It provides a structured outline of what Religious Education as an academic discipline in Catholic schools, contributes to the Catholic education and formation of young people.

This curriculum provides a solid foundation for *Grow in Love*, the Religious Education programme used in St Malachy's BNS, and all other resource material used to enhance Religious Education lessons. This curriculum also emphasises the cross-curricular nature of Religious Education, which pervades all academic subjects and aspects of life and education in Catholic schools for instance policies concerned with Anti-Bullying, RSE, SPHE.

PARENTS AND GUARDIANS

St Malachy's BNS appreciates that parents and guardians are the primary educators of their children and therefore partnership between school and parents/guardians needs to be sustained and strengthened. This is achieved in St Malachy's BNS through information evenings for parents and guardians. There is ongoing communication with parents and guardians regarding the Religious Education programme *Grow in Love* through the home activity, which they are encouraged to complete together with their children.

Parents and guardians are asked to support teachers in school by reinforcing Gospel values at home.

BOARD OF MANAGEMENT

The Board of Management has overall responsibility for the curriculum in a Catholic school. It is guided in its management of Religious Education by the principal, teachers and RE Co-ordinator. The BOM has a particular responsibility for the appointment of teachers who are suitably qualified and who will support and promote the aims and objectives of the Religious Education policy and ethos of the Catholic school. The Board of Management should also encourage and support the principal and teachers in their personal and professional faith development. They need to ensure that Religious Education is well resourced with suitable catechetical materials and that the correct time is allocated for its delivery in the classroom.

PRINCIPAL

It is essential that the Catholic ethos of the school is promoted by the principal. This is evident by their words and actions. The principal endeavors to make possible a coherent and co-ordinated approach to Religious Education, by working closely with the local Dominican community to ensure a holistic contribution to the pupils' deepening awareness and understanding of the faith into which they have been baptised. The principal will ensure that teachers have access to ongoing professional development and formation in Religious Education.

RE CO-ORDINATOR

The role of the RE Co-ordinator is of central importance in a Catholic school. In co-operation with the Board of Management, the principal, the local Dominican community and the teachers, the RE co-ordinator will ensure that the Catholic life of a school is sustained and nurtured. In their role they contribute significantly to the realisation of the overall Christian vision of the school.

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TEACHERS

Teachers can and do play a significant role in the lives of the children they teach. They can be one of the most formative influences in their lives and can do this by:

- creating an open and caring atmosphere in their classrooms;
- allowing children to feel valued and to recognise their potential and individuality;
- helping children to develop respect for themselves, for others, for the world in which they live and for God;
- respecting every child and their background;
- respecting cultural diversity in a climate that promotes openness and communication;
- developing within each child the knowledge that God loves them and that God who has given them the gift of life cares for them;
- helping children develop confidence and self esteem;
- helping children develop an understanding of the sacraments of the Church;
- fostering links between the home, school and Dominican community;
- providing opportunities for prayer within the classroom;
- instilling in young people an understanding of Gospel values and how to apply them to life a life lived in the service of others.

CHAPLAIN

The role of the chaplain is to:

- visit the school regularly;
- be available to provide pastoral care to the school community;
- foster links between the home, school and parish;
- support and encourage the sacramental preparation of pupils in collaboration with parents/guardians;
- be familiar with the Religious Education programme: Grow in Love.

DIOCESAN ADVISOR

The Archdiocese of Armagh, as part of its responsibility to support faith development in Catholic schools provides guidance in the person of the Primary Diocesan Advisor for Religious Education. Their role is to:

- visit schools;
- monitor and evaluate the provision of Religious Education in schools, providing principals and RE co-ordinators with appropriate feedback and direction;
- support the Board of Management, school principal and RE co-ordinator in the faith life of the school;
- support priests in their role as school chaplains;
- provide in-service programmes and resources for co-ordinators, teachers and chaplains;
- offer support and advice on the development of Catholic ethos within schools;
- encourage the use of and make provision for retreat days for staff and pupils;
- support the school and parish in the development and implementation of sacramental preparation programmes and faith development programmes for families;
- inform the Archbishop of the work and challenges encountered in schools in relation to Religious Education;
- support schools in the development and delivery of a RSE policy and programme which reflects the Catholic ethos and respects the wishes of parents/ guardians.

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A LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Religious Education in primary schools takes place on the island of Ireland within circumstances supported The Education Act (1998) states the requirement that schools, "promote the moral, spiritual, social and personal development of students in consultation with their parents, having regard for the characteristic spirit of the school" (Government of Ireland Education Act).

In the Irish Republic, the various patron bodies are responsible for the development and implementation of the curriculum of Religious Education in primary schools.

WITHDRAWING PUPILS FROM RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

The following are the school's arrangements for students, where the parents have requested that the student attend the school without attending religious instruction in the school. These arrangements will not result in a reduction in the school day of such students:

- A written request should be made to the Principal
- Curricular work prepared by the class teacher for completion by pupil who is not partaking in religious studies in the classroom. This curricular work will be carried out in the pupils own classroom.
- Alternative supervision within the school whereby the religious events are happening outside the school.

ASSESSMENT

Ongoing monitoring and evaluation of the Religious Education programme in school is essential. As with other subjects, the co-ordinator in line with the school assessment policy should regularly monitor and evaluate the quality of provision within the school.

This policy was ratified by the **Board of Management on 30th June 2020**. It is in line with the Religious Education policy of the Archdiocese of Armagh and is subject to review every five years.

It will be reviewed in June 2025.

Drawn up by the Board of Management of St. Malachy's BNS.