



Religious Education Policy

St Brendans BNS

St Brendans BNS is a Catholic school under the patronage of the Catholic Archbishop of Dublin. The school models and promotes a philosophy inspired by belief in God and traditional Catholic values. We promote religious education for the pupils in accordance with the doctrines, practices and ethos of the Catholic church.

In St Brendans BNS our Religious Education Policy encompasses our mission statement and our School Aims.

We believe that the whole of the educational provision in a Catholic Primary School is rooted in a religious understanding of life based on the Gospel. Worship and Religious Education in the classroom constitute the specific, but not exclusive, Religious Education provision. For the purposes of this document, Religious Education is considered as the professional area of the curriculum flowing to and from the life and values that the school seeks to proclaim and celebrate. As a Catholic school we offer Religious Education as an important contribution to the faith development of pupils.

Rationale

Our school enrolls pupils of the faiths or no faith in the school subject to full enrolment criteria and respects their beliefs and practices in accordance with the school ethos of inclusivity. Every child is welcome into the school having satisfied enrolment procedures, but the school cannot undertake to educate children of other faiths in their own faith.

As St Brendans BNS is a Catholic school we believe that Religious Education is at the heart of our curriculum as we strive to proclaim and live the Gospel Values. We see our role as supporting parents in leading their children to a greater understanding of who God is and to celebrating, with deeper faith and more understanding, the liturgy of the Church. We believe that Religious Education provides children with opportunities to recognise, affirm and celebrate the gifts and talents they and others have been given and to develop the skills which will enable them to think and question more deeply and lead, ultimately to a greater understanding and appreciation of their faith.

In proclaiming the Gospel message we endeavour to share the Gospel spirit of love in all that we do and say by providing a warm, family atmosphere reflecting the fact that all children need to feel respected, trusted and loved. We believe that Religious Education is about the 'meaning' and the need to discover answers about human existence. Love and security are the most basic human / religious needs. We teach that God is love and faithfulness, but understanding of this concept can only grow from our own experiences of kindness and love. Therefore every effort is made to create, in our school and in our classrooms, a community where the children know they are loved and feel confident

and secure. Through our teaching of Religious Education we endeavour to enrich the lives of the individuals in our school.

Aims for the Teaching of Religious Education

Our subject specific aims for the teaching of Religious Education are to enable children to:

- gain a deeper knowledge and understanding of the teachings of the Catholic Church and the ways in which it seeks to express the significance of human life while respecting the rights of people to hold beliefs which are different from their own.
- examine their own feelings views and responses in the light of their knowledge and understanding.
- Be helped towards an awareness of who they are – a unique person endowed with the gifts of the Spirit.

Towards the realisation of these aims, we have regard to the guidance provided by the Archdiocese of Dublin Diocesan Advisors.

Content

In St Brendans BNS the requirements of the curriculum are met mainly through the Alive-O series. This series, written by teachers, caters for children of all abilities and ages from Junior Infants to Sixth Class and complements the catechesis which may take place in the parish and at home.

As far as possible it matches the abilities, attainments, interests and experiences of the children and helps them to develop their knowledge and understanding in a structured way. As well as factual scripture based on knowledge it develops concepts, skills and attitudes with the children experiencing learning in a variety of ways.

The Alive-O Programme

The Alive-O programme is the core resource for the teaching of Religious Education in every Catholic Primary School in Ireland. The title Alive-O reflects one of the overriding concerns of Religious Education, namely, to enable people to become fully alive in the presence of God in themselves, in others, in the Church and in all creation.

The Alive-O programme seeks to involve the home, the school and the parish in the task of handing on the faith to primary school children.

The Alive-O programme attempts to forge a stronger link between Home and School in four principal ways.



1. Pupil Text

In each class year there is a text book which illustrates the stories and encapsulates the story which is central to that week's lesson. Parents/Guardians should be encouraged to use the pupil's book as a focus for communicating with the child, asking the child to tell them their story of the week and

discussing with them the issues which they may have discussed in class, or that they might discuss through the week.

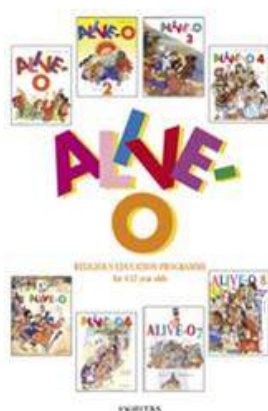


2. Worksheets/workbook

There is also an individual workbook available for each class range. This book is an extra option that the teachers may choose to use. If they chose not to use the individual book they are free of copyright to use the resource book contained in their teacher kit. We would encourage that these workbooks/pages be sent home regularly as it gives the opportunity to discuss the work of that week with their parents/guardians at home. Prayer, which is central to the Alive-O programme, is often contained on these sheets and therefore this gives an added opportunity for those at home to pray with the child the prayers that they are praying in school from the programme.



3. At home with Alive-O Sheets



The aim of these is to give parents an insight into what their children are learning in school and to provide them with some of the materials that are available to the teachers so that they can continue at home what the teacher is doing in school. Each of these sheets is designed to be photocopied back and front and folded in three like a letter in an envelope and can be coloured in by the children.

4. Liturgical Links

The Liturgical Link pages are designed to assist the Priests/Chaplains/Parish team with Sunday liturgy or in the Parish Newsletter. The overall aim of these sheets is to foster links between the Parish and the School.

CDs/Videos

Each kit includes a Video/DVD to accompany the lessons in the programme. It is a very valuable teaching tool, from Junior Infants to Sixth Class. All types are now available in CD format for the convenience of the class teacher.

5. Posters

These posters can now be purchased individually class per class from Veritas. See catalogue of Alive-O posters.

Strategies for Teaching and Learning

Curriculum Organisation:

Our Primary focus in Religious Education should be REVELATION. God is always the initiator in the history of our creation and redemption; it is His revealing of Himself that makes classroom Religious Education possible. However, it is essential that we set the scene by giving an overall picture of what we are to study, so that pupils will be able to make the connection between religious beliefs and their own lives, thus giving relevance what is being studied.

Through the programme of study of the Alive-O series the children are given opportunities to search and question using strategies to help them to focus on the development of ways of thinking, feeling and acting, enabling the children to become more reflective, open and enquiring. This will begin a process that will hopefully lead to a genuine understanding and the basis of a mature faith commitment in adult life.

Teaching Styles:

As in other curricular areas the range of teaching styles may vary and are used as appropriate. These may include whole class teaching, co-operative group work, or individual tasks. There is no specialist teaching in RE. Each class teacher is responsible for the planning, teaching and assessment of RE in their own class.

Resources:

Classroom resources are the responsibility of the classroom teacher. These include copies of teacher and pupil books for 'The Alive-O Series' together with frequently used resources of worship /liturgy.

As in other curricular areas, class teachers often use their own resources depending upon the needs of the specific topic and their own particular style of teaching. The school has a classroom set of Bibles which are kept centrally for use by all classes and each class has its own picture Bible.

Each class has its own sacred space which should include a class bible, a crucifix, holy/religious artefacts, a candle and a statue of Our Lady.

We practice meditation and relaxation in all classes in the school.

Children learn about inspirational people in the world today as well as about the lives of the saints. We seek to maintain links with the Mercy Centre, Coolock, the Irish Wheelchair Association, Friends of Calcutta, Glendalough retreat centre, Sr Concilio who works with the homeless.

Our Lady of Mercy church, Artane, is also visited regularly by classes as part of the teaching of Religious Education as well as for Mass preparation for the sacraments and other services throughout the year.

Resources and artefacts about other world faiths (Judaism, Islam, Sikh & Hindu) are also available in the library.

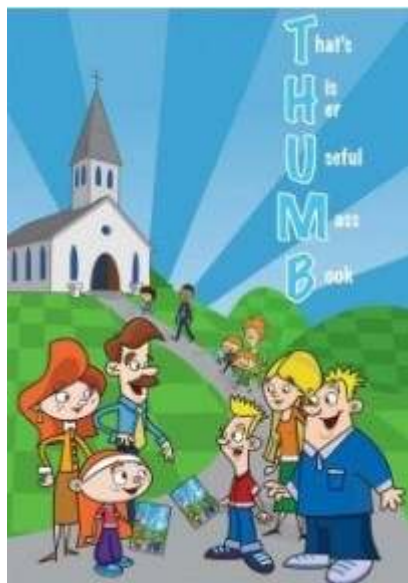
A resource that is much appreciated and valued is the time and energy of the Parish Priest as well as the parishioners/parent volunteers and family mass team who support and assist the school particularly in the 'Do this in Memory' programme which is used for children preparing for First Penance and First Holy Communion.

Do This In Memory Programme

'Do This In Memory' programme is a parish-based pre-sacramental programme designed to help children, parents/guardians and the wider parish community prepare for First Eucharist. The programme resources are designed to facilitate parents/guardians, families and the parish's active involvement in the preparation for the sacrament. It complements and supports the work of sacramental preparation in the school and in the home.

The programme's special Sunday Mass takes place once a month for eight months before First Eucharist and concludes during the parish celebration of the Feast of Corpus Christi. The parents/guardians and families of those preparing for First Eucharist are invited to participate in these Masses. A group of parents/guardians meet once a month to plan and coordinate the next Sunday of the programme.

THUMB: That's His/Her Useful Mass Book



This book provides material which helps parents/guardians and children engage with the programme before, during and after Mass. It is available to parents when they attend the Introductory Meeting. This meeting takes place in the Parish Centre early in the first term of Second class.

THUMB contains the following:

An Introduction to Do This in Memory including a Guide for Parents that suggests ways they might use the programme most effectively.

What happens at mass?

This exploration of the Mass is led by two cartoon characters, Kath and Qumen, who are also preparing for their First Eucharist. Through questions, observations and comments they help the children and their parents learn more about the Sunday Celebration.

The Rite of Mass

This section contains all the prayers and responses of the Mass. It will help parents/guardians and children to participate more fully in the celebration of the Eucharist. The responses and prayers have changed to reflect the introduction of the New Roman Missal in September 2011.

Kidstuff

The final section of THUMB contains nine activity sheets to be completed at home after each Sunday of the programme.

Grapevine Newsletters

There are eight Grapevine Newsletters which are distributed to the children (and their families) preparing for First Eucharist during the week after each Do This In Memory Mass in preparation for the next one.

Together with THUMB, the Grapevine Newsletter helps parents to engage more fully with the programme at home. It includes the text for the Gospel of the next Sunday of the programme, suggestions for family prayer and the creation of a Family Prayer Space.

Time:

As a Catholic School, in accordance with the Bishops requirement we dedicate one half hour daily of curriculum time to the discrete teaching of Religious Education. Collective worship and hymn practise is timetabled for Assembly on Friday mornings with the school Principal.

Planning

Medium term planning, taken from 'Alive-O series' is the responsibility of each teacher and incorporates the learning objectives outlined in the scheme for each topic.

As in other curricular areas, Short Term planning is also the responsibility of each class teacher who will:

- allocate time for each learning outcome to be achieved
- select appropriate activities for the whole class or groups of children
- indicate the focus and method of assessment.

However, short-term plans may be informal and some of the above information may be included in the more formal Medium Term Plans.

Religion is included in the Cuntais Miosúil making note of scripture, prayer and doctrine learnt. Advice on this is received monthly from Archdiocese's house with an outline of content for each year group and this is emailed to all teachers in the school by the Principal

Differentiation

As with all other areas of the curriculum, the purpose of differentiation in Religious Education is:

- to enable children to succeed in the set task or activity
- to challenge children beyond their comfort zone of knowledge
- understanding and skills

- to enable children to recognise their achievements and celebrate these

Differentiation is incorporated into each lesson by the class teacher.

Pupils with Special Needs & Equal Opportunities.

In St Brendans BNS the curriculum is designed to provide access and opportunity for all children who attend the school. If a child is identified as having a special need we do all we can to meet these individual needs in accordance with current school policy

Assessment

Assessment provides pupils and teachers with a clear understanding of pupil attainment, their strengths and weaknesses and what they need to do improve. It does not assess faith or the practice of faith. Assessment of RE is both formal and informal. Assessment is ongoing throughout a topic and formal assessment may take place at the end of each topic and may take the form of a specific assessment task. Assessment of RE may take the form of:

- general observation of children engaged in classroom tasks and activities;
- observation of contributions made to classroom displays;
- review of end of task, activity or lesson;
- conversations with individuals or groups;
- marking of more formal written work.

Roles and Responsibilities

Staff - Deliver Alive-O Programme

- Support the parish in delivery of the Do this in Memory programme
- Cooperate with Chaplain/Parish and diocesan advisors
- Avail of In-Service support
- Actively support the ethos of the school

Parents - Support the school during times of sacramental preparation and assist at home with Religious Education homework

Principal - Facilitates supportive interaction between all parties in implementing the programme

Success Criteria:

- An acknowledged sense of God, Faith prayer and worship within the school community
- Respect for all within the school community
- Parental interest and participation
- Recognisable links between home, school and parish