

School Ethos and Religious Education Policy Cappawhite National School

Introduction:

Cappawhite National School is a Catholic primary school established under the patronage of the Archbishop of Cashel and Emly

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:

The main objective of Cappawhite National School is to provide primary education for children from Junior Infants to Sixth Class grade. 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. This recognition is expressed in the Deed of Variation, a legal agreement between the Patron, the Trustees and the Department of Education and Skills.

The Catholic school is a faith school that expresses a set of core values that can be described as human, religious, 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, Cappawhite 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.

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. Parents are welcome to view the religious programme taught – at its core is the commandment 'Love God and love your neighbour.' Sensitivity is always shown when pupils cannot participate in liturgical celebrations

☐ Our Admissions Policy and Mission Statement makes clear that we are a Catholic School under the patronage of the local Catholic Archbishop

It is clear to parents enrolling their children that the Catholic ethos of us 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 and arrangements for pupils not of the Catholic faith

- A pre-enrolment meeting is held at which issues relating to ethos and formal religious education is discussed with prospective parents.
- Parents are made 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.
- Parents who have concerns about the content of the religious education programme are welcome to meet with the principal.
- The school cannot provide supervision in a separate class environment during the religious education period, but supervision will be provided on occasion when religious events take place outside the classroom setting
- The school cannot, however, undertake to educate children of other faiths in their own faith,

Promoting and Nurturing a Catholic Ethos

The Board of Management and the teachers have adopted the Grow in Love Catechetical 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 Penance, 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, but may not be limited to

- All Saints, Remembering the Dead
- 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 carol service or pageant
- 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
- School masses at the beginning and the end of the academic year
- Other liturgical celebrations in co-operation with the wider community of the parish

and other participatory roles in the Parish ceremonies

A Collaborative and Partnership Approach

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 Cappawhite N.S. 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: -

- Blessing of throats at the feast of St. Blaise
- 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, St. Brigid's Day
- Faith talks for parents in preparation for First Communion and Confirmation / graduation as well as including other liturgical services.
- Assisting with organisation of 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, 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.


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: 10. 08. 2020

This policy will be reviewed from time to time and may be amended whenever the need may arise.



Signed: Chairperson of the Board of Management