

Scoil Thomáis, Laurel Lodge, Castleknock, Dublin 15

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION POLICY – updated June 2016

Scoil Thomáis Religious Education Policy was formulated by the RE Co-ordinator Amanda Smith and the Principal in consultation with school staff, Parish Priest and B.O.M. This policy represents an updating of the previous school policy for Religious Education and recognises the recent introduction of the revised RE programme 'Grow In Love' which is being phased into schools from Sept 2015.

General Information about the school

Scoil Thomáis is a co-educational primary school with pupils from Junior Infants to 6th Class with an enrolment of approx 700 pupils. The school was founded in 1981 and is located in the parish of St Thomáis the Apostle in the Dublin Diocese. The school Patron is the Catholic Archbishop of Dublin Diarmuid Martin. The parish church St. Thomas the Apostle is a short walk from the grounds of Scoil Thomáis. Fr. Brendan Quinlan is the current parish priest since 2014 and serves as the patron nominee on the current school Board of Management. (November 2105-2019).

Scoil Thomáis follows the curriculum prescribed by the Department of Education and Skills. **The school provides Religious Education for Catholic pupils in accordance with the doctrines, practices and tradition of the Roman Catholic Church. Non-Catholic pupils may be exempted from the religious education programme at the request of their parents.**

Aim of Religious Education in Scoil Thomáis

The aim of Religious Education is to foster and deepen the children's faith through teaching the Catholic RE programme and through the cultivation of the Catholic Ethos of the school.

In Scoil Thomáis pupils are helped to understand that that the world is infused with the loving presence of God. Throughout the RE curriculum and the 'Grow in Love' programme pupils are given an opportunity to notice, accept and celebrate the loving presence of God in their lives. The pedagogical style that is followed in the 'Grow in Love' programme is characterised by three qualities: respect, invitation and conversation.

Religious Education Resources used in Scoil Thomáis

- The *Catholic Preschool and Primary Religious Education Curriculum for Ireland* is the foundation document for all Religious Education. This document was presented to the Principal and RE Co-ordinator in the autumn of 2015.
- The *Alive-O* programme is currently being phased out and the Grow in Love RE programme is being introduced in Scoil Thomáis from September 2015 as follows:
Junior & Senior Infants 2015/2016, 1st & 2nd 2016/2017, 3rd & 4th 2017/2018 & 5th & 6th 2018/2019.
- Each classroom has a 'Grow in Love Teacher Resource Kit' ie 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.
- There is a set of Bibles in the School Library which are available for the 5th & 6th classes to use. There is also a large Catholic Children's illustrated Bible in the school Sacred Space.
- There is a set of laminated *Alive-O* posters available to share amongst each year group level.
- The R.E. co-ordinator displays posters in the School Sacred space which are relevant to liturgical year. Additional Religious Education resources are placed in the school library or Sacred Space.
- 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 (CWS) from the Diocesan Education Office are available to the school each January and are accessible for teachers to support RE and CSW events.

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Religious Symbols In Scoil Thomáis

- A Schedule for Catholic Schools is displayed in the reception area and in the Principal's Office.
- The school reception area has two themed murals which are displayed at Christmas and Easter
- 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, Holy Water Font, liturgical calendar & Statue of Our Lady in this area. Other symbols pertaining to the Liturgical year are also displayed ie Advent wreath, a Crib & St. Brigid's Day Cross.
- There is a large copy of the Caravaggio Painting "Doubting Thomas" on the school corridor.

Classroom 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 Scoil Thomáis is supported by prayers as follows:

- As pupils progress through the class levels teachers encourage different forms of prayer ie vocal prayer word, meditative prayer and contemplative prayer.
- Each class level has a list of formal prayers to be learned in each class, cf. Appendix 1: Formal Prayers
- Teachers seek to create a prayerful atmosphere in class for prayer ie 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 & to respect and enjoy prayerful silences.
- There is a slide show available on the school server showing all the revised Mass responses and prayers which teachers are encouraged to review with pupils before attending school Mass.
- As part of the annual Catholic Schools' Week in January classes are led in a daily reflective prayer over the school intercom system.

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 Communion preparation is undertaken in 2nd Class with Confirmation Preparation undertaken in 6th Class.

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

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

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

SCHOOL BASED PREPARATION:

In Scoil Thomáis pupils are prepared thoroughly for the Sacraments of Penance & First Communion (2nd Class) & Confirmation (6th Class) by their teachers in association with the school chaplain & the parish sacramental teams. Teachers and pupils follow the preparation lessons as presented in the relevant RE programme. Parents are notified of the dates of the sacraments early in the school year once the dates are agreed between the school and the parish.

Pupils in the Sacramental classes are encouraged to nominate a charity early in the spring term and to donate to this charity after their Communion & Confirmation. Teacher arranges to send the monetary donations to the nominated charity and pupils may also include a letter to accompany their donation.

PARISH BASED PREPARATION:

The "**Do this in Memory**" programme assists in the parish based preparation of pupils in 2nd class for First Communion. This is facilitated by parent volunteers and organised through the parish.

"**You Shall be My Witness**" & "**Faith Friends**" Programmes similarly prepared pupils in 6th class for Confirmation. This is facilitated by parent volunteers organised through the parish. Confirmation pupils wear white robes for the Confirmation Ceremony and the distribution of robes is arranged by the Parents' Association in advance of the confirmation ceremony.

Scoil Thomáis, Laurel Lodge, Castleknock, Dublin 15

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Implementation of Religious Education during the School Year

- Normally Religious Education classes take place daily from 12 noon.
- Daily classes commence with a morning prayer and also a prayer before home time.
- Scoil Thomáis supports the annual Catholic Bishops Trocáire campaign and teachers have access to the cross – curricular links on the education section of its website.
- Early in September a meeting is held between the Principal, Deputy Principal, R.E. Co-ordinator & School Chaplain to schedule all religious celebrations in the coming year including
 1. Setting a date for the beginning of year Mass in the Church for 4th, 5th & 6th Classes.
 2. Parent RE Support Programme : * **See School Guidelines for Parents RE programme** Deciding dates in Nov/Dec & Feb/March with the parent co-ordinator for the Senior Infants and 1st Class Advent & Easter in-class RE programmes. * review for 'Grow In Love'
 3. Nominating classes from 4th to 6th to represent the school at Mass on Feast days normally occurring during school term ie Dec 8th Feast of the Immaculate Conception, Jan 6th Feast of the Epiphany, Ash Wednesday.
 4. During Advent & Lent the 3rd-6th classes attend Penitential services in the church. The Liturgy at the Lenten Masses for 3rd-6th classes is linked to the annual theme of the Trocáire campaign.
 5. Catholic Schools' week is celebrated each year at the end of January with whole school meditative prayer. The role of grand-parents as passers on of the faith is acknowledged when Junior Infant classes invite in their grand-parents during Catholic Schools' Week. Pupils from 3rd class wearing their uniform take part in the offertory procession at the weekend Masses in the church. There is a scheduled visit for 1st Classes from the school chaplain during CSW.

Other RE related activities include

- The 6th classes attend a retreat in the weeks prior to Confirmation at the Emmaus Centre.
- Social justice awareness is highlighted through our annual participation in the collection of food for the *Society of St. Vincent de Paul Christmas hampers*. – organised by the PA annually
- Inservice is being offered to teachers for the introduction of the Grow in Love programme. Staff Development on aspects of RE may be facilitated each year through CPH (January)
- School Staff & BOM are notified of the date of the annual Diocesan School Mass organised by the Archdiocese.
- Catholic pupils in 5th class provide the choir for the Confirmation ceremony and are prepared by their teachers annually.
- An annual Christmas Carol Service is held in the church prior to the Christmas school holidays with classes from 3rd to 6th participating. There is also an Easter Prayer Service in the Church during the school day for pupils in Senior Infants & 1st Classes.
- A monthly liturgical planning guide is e-mailed internally to all teachers from the Diocesan Office

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. Feedback has been very positive from teachers & parents.

- Parents are invited to attend the Christmas Carol Service & Easter prayer services.
- The school newsletter and school website provides regular updates on aspects of R.E. Education and sacramental preparation in the school.

School/Parish: The school has access to a team of parish volunteers who organise and deliver the *Do This In Memory, You Shall Be My Witnesses & Faith Friends* programmes. The school also has the support of a parent co-ordinator who organises volunteers for 3-4 weekly Advent and Easter preparation lessons in Senior infants & 1st Classes.

Scoil Thomáis, Laurel Lodge, Castleknock, Dublin 15

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION POLICY – updated June 2016

Scoil Thomáis Parents Association organises receptions in the school hall or community centre after the Communion & Confirmation ceremonies for the families and pupils involved.

The Role of the Religious Education Co-ordinator in Scoil Thomáis

The BOM of Scoil Thomáis and the Principal have overall responsibility for maintaining and supporting the Catholic ethos of the school. The Religious Education Coordinator supports the principal in this role. Currently the RE is a Special Duties Postholder with an allowance paid by the Department of Education & Skills. The BOM supports the assignment of RE duties as an area of responsibility within the ISM team.

The Religious Education Coordinator supports the work of the principal and the staff in the implementation of the current RE Programme and supports the continual fostering of the Catholic ethos of the school.

The RE Co-ordinator Role includes:

- To facilitate the formulation and updating of the Religious Education Policy
- To organise the distribution and collection of all necessary RE resources, e.g. *Grow in Love/Alive-O Teacher Resource Packs* Bibles for senior classes etc...
- To share and advise on online resources with the staff (see list below)
- To support the prayer life of the school throughout the liturgical year,
- To encourage the use of prayer spaces in classrooms and in school common areas, and to ensure the prominence of religious symbols and icons.
- To provide input on Religious Education at staff meetings, in order to maintain a conscious profile of this area of the school curriculum.
- To facilitate links with the parish, school chaplain and parish personnel.
- To support 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/Alive-O*.
- To liaise with Diocesan Advisers and Education Office
- To distribute RE resources throughout the Liturgical Year.

Accommodation of Pupils of Other Faiths And None

- Scoil Thomáis welcomes pupils of other faiths and none. Pupils whose parents do not wish them to participate in the Religion Education classes must remain in the classroom and work quietly and independently during religious instruction time.
- The school arranges for supervision of these pupils not partaking in Sacramental preparation etc by other teachers during church visits & sacramental preparation
- All pupils and parents are invited to attend the school annual Scoil Thomáis Christmas Carol Service However parents who do not wish their children to attend may take them home after lunchbreak on this date in December.
- Pupils of other faiths and none who are in the sacramental classes are invited to attend the reception held after the 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 in from other religious traditions or life stance in our school.

This Policy was approved and ratified by the Board of Management on 14th June 2016
It will be reviewed and updated as necessary

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Useful Religious Education Websites :

Education Secretariat

www.education.dublindiocese.ie

Catholic Preschool and Primary Religious Education for Primary Schools in Ireland.

www.veritasbooksonline.com/religious-education/re-curriculum-for-ireland.html

Grow in Love

www.growinlove.ie

Termly overview (theme, scripture, prayers, songs and doctrine)

www.education.dublindiocese.ie/2015/06/26/grow-in-love/

www.education.dublindiocese.ie/2014/12/15/alive-o/

Monthly Planning Guides (ideas for prayer spaces, liturgical feasts, prayers, lesson themes)

www.education.dublindiocese.ie/2014/06/19/monthly-planning-guidelines/

Prayer Postcards

www.education.dublindiocese.ie/prayerpaidreacha/

Catholic Schools Week

www.education.dublindiocese.ie/catholic-schools-week/

Catholic Schools Partnership

www.catholicschools.ie

Liturgical Calendar

www.marypages.com/LiturgicalCalendar.htm

(good guide to praying the Rosary)

A daily prayer online

www.sacredspace.ie

A three minute retreat

www.loyolapress.com/3-minute-retreats-daily-online-prayer.html

Pray as you Go

www.pray-as-you-go.org/70/

www.ignationspirituality.com

Spirit Radio

www.spiritradio.ie/listen-now

Trocáire

www.trocaire.org/education

Daily Meditation for Teachers:

Richard Rohr (Centre for Action & Contemplation)

www.cac.org/2016-daily-meditation-overview/