



Religious Education Policy

ST. THERESE OF LISIEUX PRIMARY SCHOOL

Diocese of Down and Connor

"The task of the teacher and the school is indeed a sacred trust conveyed to them by parents and families. As Catholic educators you have accepted a special responsibility given by parents ... On her part the Church looks upon you as co-workers, with an important measure of shared responsibility, in helping to fulfil Christ's mandate transmitted through the Apostles: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations ... teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you" (Matt 28: 20).

Saint John Paul II, Address to Catholic Educators, 1984

May 2026



Down and Connor Catholic Schools' Support Service



TABLE OF CONTENTS	PAGE NO
The Purpose of Teaching Religious Education in the Catholic School Ethos Mission Statement	3
Aims and Objectives	4-5
RE Curriculum	5-6
Marking	6
Assessment and Monitoring	7
Liturgy and Celebrations	7
Home/School/Parish/Community Links	7
Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE)	7
Teaching of Special Educational Needs	8
Staff and Management	
The RE Co-ordinator	
The Principal	
The Board of Governors	
Chaplaincy and Liturgy	8
Resources	
Outside Agencies	
Review of Policy	
Appendix 1: Useful Resources	9
Appendix 2: Withdrawal from Religious Education and Collective Worship	10
Appendix 3: Withdrawal Proforma	12-13



Down and Connor Catholic Schools' Support Service



THE PURPOSE OF TEACHING RE IN THE CATHOLIC SCHOOL

“An extremely important aspect of your role is that you are called to lead the young to Christ, to inspire them to follow him, to show them his boundless love and concern for them, through the example of your own life. Through you, as through a clear window on a sunny day, students must come to see and know the richness and the joy of a life lived in accordance with his teaching, in response to his challenging demands. To teach means not only to impart what we know, but also to reveal who we are by living what we believe ... This is indeed a vital task of the Catholic teacher: to show Jesus to the young.”

Saint John Paul II, Address to Catholic Educators, 1984

Introduction /Context

St Therese of Lisieux Primary School is a community inspired by the spirit and message of Christ. Christ's commandment to *'love one another as I have loved you'* promotes an ethos which is:

Gospel-inspired Giving living witness to the Gospel values of love, respect, truth and justice in every aspect of school life.

Person-centred Promoting the dignity, self-esteem and full development of all, as persons made in the image and likeness of God.

Life-affirming It promotes a positive culture of respect for life at all its stages, proclaiming the 'Good News' of life to the full and an eternal life of love to come.

Reflective and Worshipping It encourages an open and inquiring approach to faith and learning, promoting opportunities for reflection, prayer, and celebration of the sacraments.

Welcoming and Inclusive It welcomes and is respectful of people of all faith traditions, personal circumstances and community backgrounds, contributing actively to the work of peace, reconciliation and sharing.

The teaching of Religious Education is at the core of the NI curriculum in a Catholic school as it fulfils its mission to educate the whole person. Religious Education is not only concerned with intellectual knowledge, but its mission is to educate the pupil in discerning the meaning of their existence. Catholic schools, in partnership with the home and the parish, help pupils understand the richness of their faith, and thereby be drawn into a deeper communion with Christ and his Church. Therefore, in **ST THERESE OF LISIEUX PRIMARY SCHOOL** we believe that Religious Education is the foundation of all our learning and teaching and the entire educational process, and that the teaching and mission of Jesus Christ inspires every aspect of our school life.

Religious Education is compulsory within the Primary School curriculum.

In **ST THERESE OF LISIEUX PRIMARY SCHOOL** we aim to facilitate the fostering of faith, thus ensuring that pupils acquire and develop the essential knowledge and skills to understand their faith, engage in informed discussions, appropriate to their age and understanding, and contribute to society.



Down and Connor Catholic Schools' Support Service



The teaching of Religious Education is essentially catechetical thus furnishing the child with knowledge about God and directly encouraging the progressive growth of a relationship with God. Religious Education is linked to all our learning and teaching to enable the children to discover the breadth and depth of God's Creation.

ETHOS

The ethos of the Catholic school represents the very essence of why the school exists. This ethos is firmly rooted in the Gospel message, and being Christ centred, reflects our desire to develop the full potential of every child, staff member and parent within the school faith community. We make every effort to keep it alive in all areas of the curriculum by promoting values of faith, justice, peace and tolerance. Our values and aims are rooted in our school Mission Statement:-

As a thriving Catholic school, rooted in Christ's ministry and message, we offer a child-centred, ambitious, inclusive and holistic education; we work in partnership, in a nurturing and supportive atmosphere, building a flourishing and diverse community of care, love and aspiration.

Nurture Support Grow

AIMS



To provide a Christian environment, where mutual care and love of each other, respect for life and love of God are encouraged and developed.



To familiarise the children with the Gospel message.



To enable children of all abilities to develop their full potential in an environment where they know they are loved and can love others.



To encourage positive self-esteem where each individual can recognise their importance within the school, home and wider parish community and to further develop these links.



To develop a sense of wonder of the sacred and recognise God's presence in their lives.



To actively foster the Catholic faith within the school community through prayer, the Bible, the Sacraments and the example we show to each other.



To foster the moral development of the children.



To encourage the development of skills and knowledge that will enable the child to make the right decisions in life and deepen their understanding of what it means to be a committed Christian.



To recognise, respect and grow in knowledge of other religions and cultures.



To encourage the children to search, question and examine their own lives in light of what they are learning.



Down and Connor Catholic Schools' Support Service



OBJECTIVES

Each child is unique and has their own gifts to develop and share with others. We try to further develop these gifts and help the children value each other and their opinions and accept and appreciate that everyone's opinion is respected. We seek to achieve this by:



Living the Church's Liturgical Year through the RE programme: *Grow in Love* which explores the beliefs, values and way of life within the Catholic tradition.



Fostering faith through the celebration of the Eucharist, daily prayer, meditations, quiet voice time, prayer services and assemblies.



Becoming more familiar with and respecting the Bible as the Word of God.



Preparing the children for the reception of the Sacraments of Reconciliation, Eucharist and Confirmation at the appropriate times and in partnership with home and parish.



Enhancing doctrinal, moral, spiritual knowledge and understanding through discussion, story, music, art, mime, poetry, journaling, bible search, written work, drama and questions and answers.



Promoting activities which actively link the school with charities such as *Trócaire*, *the Pontifical Society of Missionary Children*, *Saint Vincent de Paul*.



Continuing to develop close links with the local parish, clergy and deacons.

RE CURRICULUM

The Primary Religious Education programme: ***Grow in Love*** supports the implementation of the ***Catholic Preschool and Primary Religious Education Curriculum for Ireland*** and the delivery of the ***Core Syllabus for Religious Education (NI)***.

Religious Education links with other curricular areas such as Literacy, Art, Music, The World Around Us and ICT. Certain aspects of Personal Development and Mutual Understanding (PDMU) are taught through Religious Education, but from a clearly Christian perspective. Religious Education and PDMU are not the same.









These links are clearly outlined in the monthly *Grow in Love* planners detailing the liturgical events, Bible passages, learning outcomes and resources to be used.

The curriculum is also significantly enriched by the spiritual life of the school through assemblies, prayer etc. An essential part of the Catholic ethos is the development of prayer. Children are introduced to a variety of different ways to talk to God and so develop their relationship with God:



Down and Connor Catholic Schools' Support Service



-  Quiet reflection/meditation
-  Using their 'inside voice'
-  Praying together
-  Composing their own prayers
-  Singing
-  Learning traditional prayers
-  Composing a class prayer
-  Learning the school prayer

Each classroom has a Sacred Space area, comprising a cloth in the Liturgical colour, Bible, candle, statue as appropriate, children's work etc and is added to throughout the month and changed each month.

There is a central display area in the foyer and at the front door which is linked to the sayings/writings of St. Therese of Lisieux.

MARKING

We in **St. Therese of Lisieux Primary School** believe religion cannot always be assessed in the same way as other subjects. Written work will be looked at and marked, adding any necessary comments. We encourage and expect the same high standards in RE as we do for all our curriculum areas. Key words are corrected in pupils' work if they are spelt incorrectly. Additionally, teachers evaluate and assess the children's work through discussion, circle time, questioning and observing and participation in discussions, class activities and celebrations, assemblies, liturgies and Masses.

In line with our marking policy, assessment of the children's work will be positive and in terms of personal growth, emotional understanding and knowledge building will be supportive in encouraging the child in his/her faith journey.

ASSESSMENT AND MONITORING

The RE Co-ordinator monitors the children's work (as is the practice in other subjects) and in this way will be able to assess the work being done throughout the school.

Work to be shared at home is sent home once per week. This allows parents/guardians opportunities to chat with their child about the work being undertaken each week and encourages the sharing of Bible stories, prayers and memories.

Children's work is displayed in the classroom and around the school through a variety of media, often reflecting the themes undertaken in the *Grow in Love* programme or related to the Liturgical year.



Down and Connor Catholic Schools' Support Service



LITURGY AND CELEBRATIONS

There are important moments in the life of our school community. The celebration of school/class Masses and other liturgies reflect the Liturgical Year and other notable occasions such as the beginning and end of the year, Primary 7 Leavers' Mass, Enrolment Ceremony, Commitment Ceremony, Service of Light, the celebration of the Sacraments of First Penance (P3), First Holy Communion (P4) and Confirmation (P7) and Catholic Schools' Week Activities.

Each class is encouraged to prepare and share an Assembly using a theme/topic from the Religion programme. Class assemblies usually last about 10/15 minutes and may contain Bible stories, prayers, prose, poetry, drama, music and singing.

The children have opportunities throughout the school day to pray – at the beginning and end of each day, lunchtime and during RE classes.

HOME/SCHOOL/PARISH/COMMUNITY LINKS

We recognise we are part of a wider parish community. We take part in parish celebrations, attend parish Masses on a rota basis, provide music, readers and gift carriers.

Our parents are invited to join us for many celebrations throughout the school year. We also send *Grow in Love* activities home once a week to encourage discussion, a sharing of ideas and a time to reflect and pray with your child.

While Religious Education at our school is specifically of the Catholic tradition, we welcome input from other faiths and cultures. We appreciate how the beliefs and values of other faith communities can enrich our experience.

RELATIONSHIPS AND SEXUALITY EDUCATION (RSE)

Religious Education can assist with the delivery of Relationships and Sexuality Education. We use: *Flourish* materials. This is a developmental programme from Primary One to Primary Seven. It is written to present the Christian viewpoint of Relationships and Sexuality Education. It provides children with the opportunity to make responsible and well-informed decisions. Primary 7 children avail of the *Love for Life* programme.

Please see the Relationships and Sexuality Policy document available from the school website.

TEACHING OF SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

Religious Education in its implementation provides opportunities to assist the faith development of children with special educational needs and is differentiated to meet the needs of all children. The needs of these children can be varied and complex. We recognise the need for resourcing, careful planning and differentiation to cater for children of all abilities ranging from the gifted to those with additional needs. Planning takes account of their strengths and interests. Active participation is encouraged in the learning process.



Down and Connor Catholic Schools' Support Service



STAFF AND MANAGEMENT

The teaching of Religious Education is the responsibility of all staff, and we provide opportunities whereby the staff have the opportunity for In-service through the support of the *Down and Connor Catholic Schools' Support Service* and sources committed to the Catholic Ethos. This includes the faith formation of staff through retreats or other experiences.

THE RE CO-ORDINATOR

The RE Co-ordinator forms a crucial anchor within the area of Religious Education supporting staff, keeping the school up to date on recent developments. The RE Co-ordinator should meet with staff at regular intervals.

THE PRINCIPAL

The Principal in conjunction with the staff implements the Catholic ethos in the school and ensures that RE is taught and well resourced. The Principal is supported in this by the RE Co-ordinator, RE and Ethos Link Governors and close links with the parish.

THE BOARD OF GOVERNORS

The Board of Governors supports the Catholic ethos of the school and is fully informed about the implications of any curricular review and the impact on Religious Education. Regular updates are provided by the RE Co-ordinator to the Board of Governors.

CHAPLAINCY AND LITURGY

The school chaplain liaises with the school community and supports staff in their faith. Visitation of classes forms an essential part of the ministry as well as involvement in the liturgical life of the school and parish.

RESOURCES

There is an annual requisition for new resources. A list of resources is kept and updated regularly. All classes have cloths in the Liturgical colours, a Children's Bible, Grow in Love materials. The altar cloths and Mass kit are stored in the storage eaves. The Down and Connor Catholic Schools' Support Service provide information about current resources and developments.

OUTSIDE AGENCIES

It is crucial that outside agencies invited into the school agree with the ethos of the school. Any outside agency approached should be asked to sign a document that they agree with the ethos and will work within that context.

REVIEW OF POLICY

The policy is reviewed on an ongoing basis, incorporating feedback from parents, pupils, and staff through questionnaires, informal discussions, and focus groups. Guidance and updates from DE, EA, CCMS and DCCSS are also considered to ensure the policy remains aligned with best practice.



Appendix 1:

Useful Resources

Grow in Love Monthly Planners and Yearly Overviews

<https://www.downandconnor.org/grow-love-monthly-planners/>

Prayer Services and Reflections for Staff

<https://www.downandconnor.org/prayer-services/>

School Charters for FS, KS1, KS2

<https://www.downandconnor.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Nursery-FS-Charter-Template-L.docx>

<https://www.downandconnor.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Nursery-FS-Charter-May-2021-P.docx>

<https://www.downandconnor.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Key-Stage-1-Charter-Template-L.docx>

<https://www.downandconnor.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Key-Stage-1-Charter-May-2021-P.docx>

<https://www.downandconnor.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Key-Stage-2-Charter-May-2021.docx>

Sacramental Preparation

<https://www.downandconnor.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Primary-4-Slides-on-First-Confession-and-First-Holy-Communion.pdf>

<https://www.downandconnor.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Primary-7-Slides-on-Confirmation.pdf>

RSE Guidance and Resources

<https://www.downandconnor.org/diocese/education/catholic-education-relationship-sexuality-education/>



Appendix 2:

Withdrawal from Religious Education and/or Collective Worship

Introduction /Context

St Therese of Lisieux Primary School is a community inspired by the spirit and message of Christ. Christ's commandment to *'love one another as I have loved you'* promotes an ethos which is:

Gospel-inspired Giving living witness to the Gospel values of love, respect, truth and justice in every aspect of school life.

Person-centred Promoting the dignity, self-esteem and full development of all, as persons made in the image and likeness of God.

Life-affirming It promotes a positive culture of respect for life at all its stages, proclaiming the 'Good News' of life to the full and an eternal life of love to come.

Reflective and Worshipping It encourages an open and inquiring approach to faith and learning, promoting opportunities for reflection, prayer, and celebration of the sacraments.

Welcoming and Inclusive It welcomes and is respectful of people of all faith traditions, personal circumstances and community backgrounds, contributing actively to the work of peace, reconciliation and sharing.

Legislation

As required by law (Education & Libraries (NI) Order 1986) and DE Circular 2026/09, St Therese of Lisieux PS provides Religious Education (RE) and collective worship. Parents may withdraw their child, fully or partially, from RE and/or collective worship. A withdrawal form is available from the school to exercise this right. Annex A (p4)

At St Therese of Lisieux PS we respect parental choice. Parents have a statutory right to withdraw a pupil from Religious Education and/or collective worship. If you wish to do so, please complete the attached standard withdrawal form (Annex A) p4, indicating which elements (e.g. full RE programme or certain prayers/assemblies) you wish to withdraw your child from.

No reason needs to be given.

Return the form to the RE Coordinator by email to info@stthereseoflisieux.belfast.ni.sch.uk or to the school office. We will process your request promptly and confirm in writing within 5 school days.

Alternative Arrangements

Pupils withdrawn from RE or worship will remain on-site, supervised in a suitable activity. For example, they may engage in quiet independent work, reading, or study under the supervision of a staff member. The alternative programme will respect the pupil's dignity



Down and Connor Catholic Schools' Support Service



and cover the time they would have been in RE/collective worship. To ensure that each child is appropriately supervised, it may be the case that your child will remain within a classroom setting undertaking their alternative activities. The class teacher may discuss the arrangements with you.

A Withdrawal Register will be kept for all requests. Each entry will record: pupil name and class/year; parent name; date of request; whether withdrawal is full or partial (and specify units/elements, if partial); requested start date (immediate or future date); details of alternative arrangements provided; date of acknowledgement sent; and name of staff member handling the request. The date the request is logged will be recorded and the register will be kept securely in the pupil's records (retained per usual school records policy).



Appendix 3:

Withdrawal Proforma

Section 1: Pupil Details

Name of pupil: _____

Year group/class: _____

Section 2: Parent/Carer Details

Name of parent/carers submitting this request:

Relationship to pupil: _____

Preferred contact email: _____

Preferred contact phone number: _____

Section 3: Request for Withdrawal

(Please tick all that apply)

I request that my child be withdrawn from:-

Religious Education

All RE

Specific RE topics/units (please specify):

Collective Worship

All collective worship

Specific elements of collective worship (please specify e.g. prayers, hymns, liturgical acts, assembly, particular speakers):

Section 4: Start Date

I request that withdrawal arrangements begin:

Immediately

or

From (date): ____ / ____ / ____



Section 5: Confirmation

I understand that:

- I do not need to give reasons for this request;
- The school must implement this request promptly and without negotiation;
- This request will remain in place until I submit a written request to end or amend it.

Signature of parent/carer: _____

Date: ____ / ____ / ____

Section 6: School Use Only (to be completed by the school)

Date received: ____ / ____ / ____

Acknowledgement issued:

Yes – date: ____ / ____ / ____

Arrangements begin: ____ / ____ / ____

Alternative arrangements provided:

Recorded in register:

Yes – date: ____ / ____ / ____

Name of staff member processing request