**Ballyboughal National School**

**Religious Education Policy**

**Introductory Statement**

Ballyboughal National School is a Catholic school under the patronage of the Catholic Archbishop of Dublin. The school models and promotes a philosophy of life inspired by belief in God and in the life of Jesus Christ and the saints.

It provides 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.

**Rationale**

This policy was drawn up in response to an invitation from the Catholic Schools Partnership to reflect on the life, ethos and characteristic spirit of a Catholic school and in response to requests from teachers and parents for a clear statement of our role as a Catholic school. It was agreed that we would update our mission statement so that it would be clearly rooted in the mission of Christ.

The policy was drawn up in accordance with the Suggested Guidelines towards the Formulation of Religious Education Policy for Catholic Primary Schools. The Board of Management, teachers, parents and the parish priest were involved in the development of this policy.

**Aim**

The aim of the Religious Education Policy is to foster and deepen the children’s faith in the context of the school community, the parish and the family. We endeavour to promote the true value and dignity of each person in the school and to grow and work together as a learning community having a living relationship with God and with other people.

**Religious Education Programme**

The Board of Management and the teachers have adopted the Alive-O 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, Holy Communion and Confirmation. The programme is studied each day for one half-hour. A Christian ethos however permeates the school day and the life of the school.

**Whole School Dimension**

The Schedule for Catholic Schools and the Mission Statement of Ballyboughal National School are on display in the foyer. Religious emblems are on display in the foyer and throughout the school, including crucifixes, statues, Bibles and candles. Meaningful pictures and artworks are on display throughout the school building. Each day commences with group prayer. Each classroom has a Sacred Space. The major Catholic feasts are celebrated. They are marked with the aid of signs and symbols displayed throughout the school.

* Advent – the Advent wreath
* Christmas – crib
* Feast of St. Brigid – traditional crosses
* Feast of St. Patrick – depiction of story and shamrock
* Lent – symbols of repentance and ashes
* Easter – symbols of the new life of resurrection, the empty tomb
* Pentecost – artistic depiction of the coming of the Holy Spirit
* All Saints feast day in November

Highlights of the church year are embraced and celebrated, including Advent, Christmas, Lent, Holy Week and Easter. Liturgical celebrations are held on some occasions, e.g. the opening and closing of the school year, blessing and distribution of Holy Ashes. Prayer services are held for Catholic Schools Week, to mark events in the church year and at times of trauma. Pupils in senior classes are invited to receive the sacrament of Confession during Advent and Lent. The pupils of the school, along with their parents, join in the celebration of First Penance and Communion, and Confirmation. Catholic Schools’ Week is celebrated each year. Other liturgical celebrations may be held in co-operation with the parish. Pupils in senior classes attend Mass in Ballyboughal church occasionally. Pupils in junior classes visit Ballyboughal Church for a short prayer occasionally.

The Catholic education offered in Ballyboughal N.S. is conducted in collaboration with the children’s parents and the local parish of Damastown, Naul and Ballyboughal. We see our role as being supportive of the role of parents and parish.

Subject to the terms of the Enrolment Policy, we enrol pupils of other faiths or no faith in the school and respect their beliefs and practices in accordance with the school ethos of inclusion. Consultation with parents of these pupils may take place on enrolment. Each child is welcome to attend and benefit from the Catholic religious education programme. If parents have difficulty with this, the Principal shall meet with them to see if an accommodation can be reached within the classroom. Parents are welcome to view the religious education programme taught. Sensitivity is always shown when parents of pupils do not allow them to participate in liturgical celebrations. Parents will be consulted on such occasions. The school cannot, however, undertake to educate children of other faiths in their own faith, nor can it provide supervision during the religious education period apart from the class.

**Spiritual Formation of Teachers**

The spiritual nourishment of teachers is understood by the Board of Management to be an integral part of the religious education programme undertaken by the school. The school is a safe and caring environment for its employees and supports are provided for individual members of staff to foster their deeper development.

**Teaching Methodologies Used to Achieve Aims**

Study of the Alive – O Teacher’s Guide

Story, drama and role play

Visual arts

Interactive learning

Prayer experiences

Sacramental and non-sacramental liturgies

Questions and answers helping children to use their own words

Regular hymn singing at choir practice

**Resources**

Each class teacher has an Alive-O kit including a Teachers’ Manual, posters and CDs. Each class has a set of Alive-O textbooks for use by the pupils. Pupils have Alive-O workbooks for use at school and at home. Other resources including bibles, children’s bibles, prayers books, lives of the saints, posters and CDs are available when required. Resources supplied by the Archdiocese of Dublin or by Catholic agencies such as Trocaire are circulated to the teachers.

**Preparation for the Sacraments**

Children in Second Class, who have been baptised in the Catholic Church, make their First Penance and First Holy Communion in Ballyboughal Church each year. They are thoroughly prepared in all aspects of the sacraments by their class teacher, under the direction of and in consultation with the principal, in keeping with the Catholic ethos of the school. Parents of children preparing for First Holy Communion are invited to participate in the Do This In Memory programme facilitated by the parish priest, with the assistance of volunteer parents. A meeting is held in the school to outline the programme.

Children in Fifth and Sixth Class, who have been baptised in the Catholic Church, celebrate the Sacrament of Confirmation on alternate years. They are thoroughly prepared in all aspects of the sacrament by their class teachers, under the direction of and in consultation with the principal, in keeping with the Catholic ethos of the school. Parents of children preparing for Confirmation are invited to participate in You Shall Be My Witnesses programme facilitated by the parish priest, with the assistance of volunteer parents. A meeting is held in the school to outline the programme.

The liturgy for the celebration of the sacraments is prepared by the principal, in consultation with the parish priest and with the relevant class teachers. Pupils are invited to participate in the liturgy by praying, by singing and by undertaking tasks during the liturgy.

Pupils of other faiths or no faith are welcome to join their classmates in the preparation for the sacraments which takes place during the school year. They are also welcome, along with their parents if they wish to attend, at the celebration of the sacraments. Parents who do not wish their children to be involved in the preparation for, or the celebration of, the sacraments should discuss these matters with the principal.

**Success Criteria**

We will know this policy is successful in our school if:

* There is an acknowledged sense of God, faith, prayer and worship within the school community
* There is an ordered community where respect for all is evident at all times
* There is an outward – looking care for the less fortunate in society
* There is evidence of parental interest in the religious education programme
* There are recognisable links between parish/home/school
* Children can speak confidently of their faith
* All school planning and policy development is clearly linked to and inspired by the school’s mission statement.

**Responsibility for Implementing This Policy**

* The Board of Management is responsible for facilitating the smooth implementation of the policy in consultation with the Principal, staff and diocesan advisors.
* The principal takes an active role in encouraging the whole-school aspects of the programme and monitoring progress throughout the school. She liaises with the parish in the organisation and celebration of school and parish events. She timetables faith development and religious education for staff and board meetings.
* The teachers:

Inform themselves through studying the Alive – O teacher’s manual

Deliver and teach the Alive – O programme appropriate to their class

Cooperate with the parish priest and the diocesan advisors

Avail of in-service support provided

Actively support the spirit and ethos of the school

* The parents co-operate and support the school in its effort, especially at times of sacramental preparation and at other school events to which they are invited. They are also asked to help with religious education homework and to read the parts of the Alive-O programme that are intended for them.

**Ratification and Implementation**

A draft of this policy was circulated to all teachers and members of the Board of Management early in 2015. Copies were also made available to parents on request. The parish priest, Rev. Denis Delaney, was also asked for his views. Some amendments were made following discussion at staff meetings.

The Religious Education Policy of Ballyboughal National School was agreed by the staff at a meeting held on 10th March 2015. It was ratified by the Board of Management at a meeting held on 20th May 2015. This policy will be implemented from 1st June 2015 and reviewed on a regular basis.

**Signed:** Maeve O’Doherty **Date:** 20/05/2015

Principal

**Signed:** Martin Hughes **Date:** 20/05/2015

Chairperson