



# **St. Michael's School**

## **Religious Education Policy**

May 2026

## **School Ethos**

St. Michael's School is a welcoming and inclusive community under the Patronage of the Archbishop of Dublin and Trusteeship of the Daughters of Charity.

As a Catholic school, inspired by the vision of Louise de Marillac and the philosophy of Vincent de Paul, in partnership with parents/guardians, staff and the Archdiocese of Dublin, we seek to create a community based on Gospel values which are enshrined in all school policies and practices.

The core values that guide the Daughters of Charity Organisation are Respect, Collaboration, Service, Justice, Creativity and Excellence. Each month a new core value is chosen and communicated to all services within the Daughters of Charity organization, placing a special emphasis on that value for that month. This core value is then highlighted on a notice board in the staffroom and shared for all staff on Aladdin.

## **Mission Statement**

St. Michael's School is under trusteeship of the Daughters of Charity. We provide a secure, healthy and caring environment which values the uniqueness of each person.

As a team:

- We recognise the needs and talents of each pupil and provide an appropriate broad curriculum.
- We foster self-esteem, empowering each pupil to reach his/her full potential.
- We believe in an active partnership between home and school.

It is our wish that pupils leave us with enhanced self-esteem and with life skills and attitudes which will enable them to lead lives satisfying to themselves and lives that will contribute to the betterment of society.

## **Introductory Statement**

St. Michael's School caters for pupils with Mild General Learning Disabilities aged 5-18 years of age. The entire Curriculum and way of life in this Catholic School is designed to enable the pupils to grow to Christian maturity. Our Catholic Ethos, Mission Statement and Schedule are displayed in the reception foyer in both the main school and Cois Life building. All staff share the responsibility to deliver our Ethos and Mission. We do this together in the day to day of school life, in the way we work together, in the way we show respect and care for our pupils and their families and in the way prioritise the delivery of the religious education curriculum.

This Religious Education Policy has been reviewed in light of the new Religious Education curriculum, Catholic Preschool & Primary Religious Education Curriculum for Ireland, 2015 and the Grow In Love Programme. It is the duty of all staff to conform to

the direct teaching of Religious Education and to review our practices, with consideration for the educational needs of our pupils.

This policy has been revised and written in light of:

- St. Michael's School Mission Statement;
- St. Michael's Relationship and Sexuality Education Policy;
- St. Michael's Social Personal Health Education Policy & Wellbeing Statement;
- St. Michael's Code of Behaviour Policy;
- St. Michael's Anti-Bullying Policy;
- Guidance from the Diocesan Advisors for Religious Education in Primary Schools and attendance by teachers at the in services provided on same;
- Feedback and recommendations from staff, parents and pupils.

### **Rationale and Vision**

The purpose of this policy is to provide an overview of the teaching of Religious Education in St. Michael's School. It is intended to inform and guide teachers in their teaching and learning of Religious Education.

The school models and promotes a philosophy of life inspired by belief in God and in the life of Jesus Christ. While St. Michael's School is a Catholic school, we recognize, and welcome the presence of pupils of other faiths or of no faith in our school community. Our Catholic ethos is expressed through the core values of our school, in our relationships with each other, in our actions and practice. The focus is on the individual. Pupils are constantly encouraged and affirmed to achieve their best, while recognising each child's individual abilities and gifts. We model the values that we promote in the way we work together and in how we relate to each other. Each teacher's professional and committed delivery of the RE curriculum is an important part of this.

We want every student to experience quality teaching and to enjoy and succeed in learning during the time devoted to religious education. In so far as is possible and appropriate to his/her level of development and ability, we expect every student to engage actively and positively with the RE curriculum.

### **General Aim and Outcomes**

The aim of this Religious Education Policy is to help children mature in relation to their spiritual, moral and religious lives, through their encounter with, exploration and celebration of the Catholic faith.

#### **Desired Outcomes:**

Children will, in a way appropriate to age, maturity, and faith development:

- come to know God the Father, through Jesus Christ, in the Spirit
- value self as loved and gifted by God
- become aware of the religious, spiritual and moral dimensions of their own being

- come to a knowledge and understanding of the truths about human life, its origins and purpose as revealed by God and taught by the Church
- develop competence in the investigation, understanding, appreciation and communication of Catholic culture, tradition, prayer, sacramental life and practice, understanding the relationship between faith and life, and between faith and culture
- learn how to participate in the prayer and worship of the Church
- develop skills of religious literacy, in the Catholic religious tradition, appropriate to young children
- develop virtue, personal and social responsibility, ecological consciousness and the ability to act in accordance with an informed conscience when making moral decisions as a child
- develop an understanding of what membership of the Church means and of the Christian missionary vocation
- acquire a sensitivity to and knowledge of other Christian traditions (ecumenism)
- acquire a sensitivity to some other religious traditions and a basic knowledge of their principal beliefs, spiritual values and traditions (inter-Religious Education)<sup>13</sup>
- develop Christian attitudes and values: for example, love, justice, compassion, truthfulness and respect.

### **General Information**

#### **a) Diocesan Information**

**Name of Diocese:** Archdiocese of Dublin  
**Name of Patron/Archbishop:** Archbishop Dermot Farrell

#### **b) Parish Information**

**Name of Parish:** Chapelizod Parish  
**Name of Parish Priest:** Fr Eugene Taaffe

#### **c) School Information**

**Name of Chaplain:** none at present; support of Fr Cornelius, Vincentian priest given to support pupils and staff.

### **Grow In Love Programme and Resources**

The title of the religious education series for primary schools in Ireland is **Grow In Love**. It adopts a multimedia approach to teaching, incorporating music, CDs, teacher's manual for all levels, children's books for all levels, poster set and online resources as detailed in the teachers' Grow In Love manuals. Additional resources are provided online at [www.growinlove.ie](http://www.growinlove.ie). There are five levels to the curriculum, Preschool level, Level 1 – Junior & Senior Infants, Level 2 – First & Second class, Level 3 – third and fourth classes, Level 4 – fifth & sixth classes. Each level distinguishes four inter-related strands of the curriculum, I.e. Christian Faith, the Word of God, Liturgy/Prayer and Christian

Morality. Together these four strands outline the knowledge and understanding, skills and processes, distinctive of learning in this curriculum area. The detailed statement of content for each of the four strands encourages a rich variety of approaches to teaching and learning that cater for the different needs of individual children. The strands are not discrete areas of learning as they overlap and interact to form a holistic learning experience for the child. Organisation of the strands are detailed on pages 34 & 35 of the Curriculum Guidelines with Special Education Curriculum Guidelines detailed from pages 144 – 154. The Grow In Love Programme also provides kits for the teaching and preparation for the Sacraments of Forgiveness, the Eucharist and Confirmation. The children's books attempt to create a strong link between Home and School. In our school, the Grow In Love Programme is adopted and adapted in all classes. Primary classes timetable RE for the required 2.5 hours per week.

In our post primary sector of the school our pupils receive one hour per week of tuition from an RE subject specialist teacher. Following the Guidelines provided by the Irish Episcopal Conference the specialist teacher uses the Liturgical calendar and sacred scripture to deliver lessons which focus on

1. The life and teaching of Jesus.
2. His death, resurrection and ascension
3. The life and example of key saints
4. Important dates and festivals in the Churches year.

The remaining hour is delivered by the class teacher using the Grow In Love Programme, adopted and adapted in all classes. The title of the religious education series for primary schools in Ireland is **Grow In Love**. The level used may vary from class to class and from year to year depending on factors such as age, ability, movement/not of pupils to another class, as well as whether/not pupils are being prepared to receive Sacraments.

At the start of the school year teachers have an opportunity to examine the different levels of the Grow In Love Programme before deciding on the level and resources to purchase. Textbooks and/or workbooks from the Programme are utilised (where appropriate) with help in class.

With reference to the unique context of Special schools, we acknowledge that innovative and active storytelling and artwork are key pedagogical practices that underpin the delivery of the content during religious education.

**Bibles:** Class sets of approved Bibles Contemporary English Version are available. Picture Bibles are also available for younger pupils. A Children's Bible and other resources are accessed using the Interactive Whiteboards on the internet.

**Video:** Teachers use video clips and PowerPoint presentations in class to supplement the telling of the stories from scripture, the lives of Saints and other key topics.

**Resources for the Liturgical seasons are made available to staff and are prominently displayed in classrooms and throughout the school.** All communication received from the Education Secretariat is made available for teachers on Aladdin.

**Sacred Space:** Each classroom has a designated Prayer/Sacred Space. Led by the teacher and SNAs, the students decorate this space marking the different seasons and feast days in the liturgical calendar. By maintaining this Sacred Space, we help the pupils sense that God is present. Teachers can encourage pupils to bring objects to school for this space and take ownership of the symbols which may change regularly. A Sacred Space is also maintained in the Foyer area reflecting the time in the Liturgical Calendar.

**Symbols:** There is a crucifix visible in every classroom and in the foyer. There is a large statue of Our Lady at the bottom of the main corridor and a smaller version in most classrooms. There is a Holy Water Font located in the reception area along with Holy pictures depicting the Blessed Virgin Mary, St. Louise de Marillac and St. Vincent de Paul.

**Gathering for prayer:** Each morning the pupils join the Principal via the school's public address system in formal prayer. When possible, this prayer is led by the pupils. A monthly schedule of prayer is drawn up to provide diversity (See Appendix 2).

Suggested: Formal prayers are said, led by the Principal, throughout the school day. In each classroom a selection of formal prayers are recited in line with the relevant Grow In Love Programme (details available in the back of the children's books) selected by the class teacher depending on comprehension and requirements of the class.

A separate prayer room is available for use by small groups. All classes are expected to visit the prayer room throughout the year. The school community comes together regularly to pray and to mark the important events and occasions in the liturgical year. The choir provides musical accompaniment for these events and enables the whole congregation to be actively involved in the liturgy.

## **Sacramental Preparation**

### **A. General**

Sacramental Preparation is an on-going process throughout the school. Teachers, S.N.A.'s, parents/guardians and pupils all play an important role in preparing pupils to receive the Sacraments. Teachers of Communion/Confirmation pupils meet and collaborate. Pupils from these classes are grouped together at least once a week (where possible) with both teachers and dedicated lesson plans are delivered to them beginning in September of their Communion/Confirmation year with the delivery of the Grow In Love Programme. Displays of pupils' work are prepared to aid their understanding of the Sacraments and some of these are displayed on the main corridor. The school choir provides the music for Confirmation and Communion. All staff are welcome if available. Prior to and following Sacramental Ceremonies, teachers across the school refer to the Sacraments during Religious Education classes and the importance of them. Each celebration is recorded using photography and video camera.

The dress code for the pupils receiving the Sacraments is as follows:

- Uniforms are worn for the Sacrament of Reconciliation.
- Appropriate Communion attire is worn for the Holy Communion.

- Appropriate Confirmation attire is encouraged for Confirmation, guidelines of which are given in advance to parents who are advised not to go to any expense and to buy clothes that can be worn again.

## **B. Sacraments of Forgiveness and First Holy Communion**

All terms – Forgiveness, Penance, Reconciliation and Confession are taught to the pupils throughout the school with a particular emphasis on the term ‘Forgiveness’. When the Sacrament of First Forgiveness is being prepared for, the Prayers of Forgiveness are taught during the Communion Year. Age and ability-appropriate language is used to explain the concept of being sorry and showing forgiveness. The seasons of the Liturgical Year are used to support the work in the Grow In Love Programme. Letters and meetings with parents/guardians help communicate the values being emphasised and encourage support from them in the celebration of First Holy Communion which are:

- Jesus’ love for us.
- Trying to live like Jesus i.e. being good and kind.
- Trying to think about how he would want us to behave.

*In consultation with parents it will be decided when pupils receive the Sacrament of First Holy Communion. Any Mass celebrated during the year will be used to practice responses and prayers being taught.*

Parents/Guardians are helped towards a deeper understanding of the Sacraments by attending an information meeting, *attended by a Vincentian priest, where possible*, and being communicated with through letters. They are made aware of the “Do this in memory” Programme offered by some parishes and they attend a preparatory Service as well as the Sacramental Celebrations of First Forgiveness and First Holy Communion. Booklets are provided to guide each Sacrament. The Sacrament of First Holy Communion is celebrated in the Church of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Chapelizod Parish. The Sacrament of First Forgiveness may be celebrated in the school, depending on the availability of the Parish Church.

## **C. Sacrament of Confirmation**

All core values including the gifts, fruits and symbols of the Holy Spirit are emphasised in the preparation for Confirmation. All Sacraments received to date i.e. Baptism, Forgiveness and Holy Communion are discussed and reviewed to illustrate the on-going Faith Formation of the pupils. The Grow In Love Confirmation material is used as well as other methods to record the Faith Journey Scrapbooks are prepared by the pupils. The significance of the Pledge is highlighted to them. Once pupils have been confirmed, lessons, Mass and participation in all future school Sacramental Celebrations reinforce the messages learnt during this time. The Sacrament of Confirmation is celebrated in the Church of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Chapelizod Parish.

Parents/Guardians are invited to participate in the preparation of their child for the Sacraments by attending the Service of Commitment and a meeting in the school. *They also participate in helping pupils with their Confirmation Booklet and attend the Service*

*of Light and the Confirmation Ceremony.* Parents/Guardians are encouraged to take pupils to mass to help guide their children on their faith journey.

## **Implementation of Religious Education throughout the School Year**

### **Teaching staff and the provision of religious education:**

Teaching staff should deliver the Religious Education Curriculum in our school within the context of the following:

- the school ethos
- the school mission statement
- the schedule for Catholic Schools.
- the needs and abilities of pupils.

### **Cross-curricular links:**

Integrated learning is an important aspect of the curriculum. Class teachers are encouraged to adopt an integrated approach to their delivery of RE. Well planned, integrated topics or themes provide a variety of contexts for developing knowledge and skills. In St. Michael's school we will make every effort to integrate our teaching of Religious Education with many other subjects in the curriculum e.g. R.S.E., S.P.H.E., Nature, English, Drama, Music and Art. Topics such as the work of Charities e.g. Trocaire, St. Vincent de Paul etc. lend themselves to this approach. For example, Trocaire Packs available at Lenten Times highlight a denial of human rights and are utilised across the school (age and ability-appropriate) prompting artwork, writing, oral language (discussion) and action (perhaps fundraising or awareness raising) among others.

### **Ritual Format of the Mass:**

The pupils in our school are taught the formal responses of the Mass. These responses are then reinforced at times of celebration of Mass in our school. Once a month and/or on special occasions, To date, in preparation for the Sacraments, the class teacher devotes time to practice responses and the format of the Mass.

### **Observing the Liturgical Calendar and Celebration of Feast Days:**

The Diocesan Advisors produce activity packs at various times of the year highlighting Liturgical Seasons as well as key Feast Days. These packs are used across the school to prepare for and highlight the significance of the Feast Days (age and ability-appropriate). The key dates and seasons will be marked by displays throughout the school and pupils work from across the school are included.

A timetable for use of the Prayer Room is made available to staff. Large group or even whole school prayer services involving reflection, song and/or movement can be arranged to mark particular liturgical events.

At Christmas time, all classes are invited to prepare a performance to share with the school community and parents/guardians are invited to this. The story of Christmas is told and/or acted out and songs depicting this time are performed by the pupils.

Where the school is open on Feast Days, e.g. the Feast of the Immaculate Conception on December 8<sup>th</sup> or the Feast of the Epiphany on January 6<sup>th</sup>, every effort will be made to arrange for Mass to be celebrated in school. A Mass is arranged to mark the beginning of the new school year which normally coincides with the Feast Days of St. Michael and St. Vincent de Paul.

In St. Michael's School, we highlight the role of our mother Mary in the life of Christ and in our lives. In the month of May we build May Altars in every classroom and invite students to participate in meetings of the 'Legion of Mary. Pupils will learn about and will pray the Rosary during May.

### **School retreats and Pilgrimages**

School retreats can be memorable and worthwhile experiences for our pupils. Teachers are encouraged to source a retreat appropriate to the age, ability and comprehension level of the pupils in their class. These retreats may take place in school or may involve a visit to another location. A Pilgrimage to a Marian Shrine should be arranged, if possible, every year.

### **Timetabling Issues:**

In shaping our timetable, we draw on the "Rules for National Schools" highlight the importance of having a timetable to illustrate times of Religious Instruction and the rights of parents/guardians in respect of this education for their son/daughter:

*Rule 69 states:*

- 1. The religious denomination of each pupil must be entered in the school register and roll book. This information should be ascertained from the parent (the father, if possible) or the guardian of the pupil, where necessary.*
- 2. (a) No pupil shall receive, or be present at, any Religious Instruction of which his parents or guardian disapprove.  
(b) The periods for formal Religious Instruction shall be fixed so as to facilitate the withdrawal of pupils to whom paragraph (a) of this section applies.*
- 3. Where such Religious Instruction as their parents or guardians is not provided in the school for any section of the pupils, such pupils must, should their parents or guardians so desire, be allowed to absent themselves from school, at reasonable times, for the purpose of receiving that instruction elsewhere.*
- 4. Visitors may not be present during formal Religious Instruction unless with the express approval of the manager.*

*The timetabling of secular and religious instruction is set out in Rule 54:*

*Rule 54.1 states:*

*The timetable must be displayed in a conspicuous place in the school.*  
*Rule 54.2 states:*

*The timetable must show the times for Religious Instruction and Secular Instruction.*

According to the Department of Education & Skills, the Patron and the Board of Management, the suggested time to be allocated to Religious education in Primary Schools is 2 hours 30 minutes per class per week. The timetable for Religious Education during the academic year is provided annually by class teachers. *(Please note that due to timetabling constraints in the senior school this is not always possible).*

Each week up to twenty minutes is allocated for Christian mediation and more than twenty-five minutes is allocated to school and classroom prayer.

### **Partners in Religious Education**

Parents/Guardians are the primary educators of their children and their role as religious educators is seen by the school as fundamental. It is important that parents/guardians actively encourage and promote children in attending mass.

#### **A. Home/School**

Each year in St Michael's School we celebrate "Catholic Schools Week". This is advertised at Mass on the Sunday preceding it in each Parish and a display board is prepared. The Diocesan Advisors also provide information, activities and suggestions for events and activities to be completed by the school. Parents/Guardians are asked to invite Grandparents to school (if possible) on a specified day. This day called "Grandparents Day" is a chance for parents/guardians to escort their parents into our school and to visit their son/daughter's class. They are interviewed about topics such as their experience of being young, their life's journey etc. They may also be invited to complete an activity with their grandchild.

Parents/Guardians are invited to attend all Sacramental and preparatory celebrations as well as the Christmas performances. When the pupils are graduating at the end of each year, parents/guardians are invited to attend with other family members to celebrate their son/daughters time in our school. Parents/Guardians will be encouraged to participate actively in the ceremonies.

As appropriate, the home links of the Grow In Love Programme should be used to inform and involve parents/guardians in the Religious education of the children. A mind map/summary of the Ethos and teaching of RE was documented in 2023 by the Assistant Principal II and this was shared with parents and circulated among the school community (Appendix 3)

#### **B. School/Parish**

Although our school is located in the Parish of Chapelizod, our pupils live in a variety of different Parishes around Dublin, Kildare and Meath. Thus, programmes for First

Eucharist such as “Do This in Memory” and for Confirmation such as “You Shall Be My Witness” are mentioned to parents/guardians who can decide whether/not to investigate the availability of them in their Parishes and participate in them with their son/daughter.

### **C. School/Patron**

‘Understanding and Living the Ethos in a Catholic Primary School’ is used as a reflection and self-evaluation tool to support the identification of targets that enhance and broaden our Catholic ethos for the benefit of the entire school community. The school endeavours to engage in this reflective process annually, reviewing standards of effective practice and identifying opportunities for ongoing improvement (Appendix 3).

The school also seeks to provide opportunities for pupils to deepen their understanding of the Catholic faith through a range of faith formation and leadership initiatives. Subject to pupil interest, staffing and resources, the school will commit to establishing a Legion of Mary lunchtime club or similar faith-based initiative, providing opportunities for pupils to learn more about the life of Mary, prayer, service and the sharing of faith stories within a supportive and age-appropriate environment.

Monthly memos and other RE Information is received monthly to guide the teaching of RE from the patron. This is emailed to all teachers to inform/assist with their planning and teaching and learning.

### **Pupils of Other Religious Traditions**

St. Michael’s School is an inclusive and welcoming environment, accepting and acknowledging pupils of all Faiths and none. Parents/Guardians are made aware at the time of enrolment that our school is a Catholic school, respectful of other religions and traditions. All pupils will learn about other faiths at different times while with us. We will acknowledge and respect the important feasts and festivals of other faiths which may be represented in our school community. Children of other faiths are encouraged to share their faith stories and knowledge with others.

### **Review and revision of this policy**

This policy was reviewed in April 2026. The revised policy was presented to the Board of Management at a meeting on 24<sup>th</sup> June 2026.

  
**Signed:**  
**Chairperson, Board of Management**

**Date: 24<sup>th</sup> June 2026**

# Appendices

## Appendix 1: Prayer Space

A space which incorporates symbols which help the pupils to sense that God is present within their experience.

- Can relate to the themes of the lessons.
- Pupils can bring in objects for the space.
- Needs to change regularly.
- Meaning more important than the look.
- Pupils could be encouraged to make their own sacred space/prayer corner at home.

## Creating an atmosphere conducive to prayer:

Location:

- a different part of the room
- local church
- outdoors

Lighting: -close curtains  
-candles

Senses:

- scented candles/oils
- incense
- music, songs, hymns
- silence
- colourful symbols and seasonal pictures
- objects (can be from the natural world) which can be touched, held, passed around

Liturgical Symbols:

- lighted candle
- bible
- holy water

## Quality Religious Images

## Prayer Space

**Appendix 2:****Schedule of Prayers**

**Principal will open each prayer with the sign of the cross in English and will conclude each prayer with the sign of the cross as Gaelige.**

| <b>Month</b>     | <b>Morning</b>                                      | <b>Lunchtime</b>                        | <b>End of School Day</b> |
|------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| <b>September</b> | The Morning Prayer<br>The Our Father                | Grace Before Meals                      | The Night Prayer         |
| <b>October</b>   | The Morning Prayer<br>Hail Mary                     | Grace Before Meals                      | The Night Prayer         |
| <b>November</b>  | Hail Mary<br>Prayer for those who have died         | Grace Before Meals                      | The Night Prayer         |
| <b>December</b>  | Hail Mary<br>Glory be to the Father                 | Grace Before Meals                      | The Night Prayer         |
| <b>January</b>   | The Morning Prayer<br>Act of Sorrow                 | Grace Before Meals<br>Grace After Meals | The Night Prayer         |
| <b>February</b>  | The Our Father<br>Prayer to the Holy Spirit         | Grace Before Meals<br>Grace After Meals | The Night Prayer         |
| <b>March</b>     | The Morning Prayer<br>St. Patrick's Breastplate     | Grace Before Meals<br>Grace After Meals | The Night Prayer         |
| <b>April</b>     | The Morning Prayer<br>Prayer to Guardian Angel      | Grace Before Meals<br>Grace After Meals | The Night Prayer         |
| <b>May</b>       | Decade of the Rosary over the<br>course of the week | Grace Before Meals<br>Grace After Meals | The Night Prayer         |
| <b>June</b>      | The Morning Prayer<br>Glory be to the Father        | Grace Before Meals<br>Grace After Meals | The Night Prayer         |

The Principal will also include other prayers in line with Feast Days and Liturgical Calendar.

## **Appendix 3 – Documented communications with the school community**

### **Understanding and Living the Ethos in a Catholic Primary School- a process centred on conversations**

Working Group (Principal; In School Management Representative; Teacher Representative; Board Representative; SNA Representative; & Parent Representative).

**YEAR ONE Aim:** Launched the process; chose a facilitation model, and completed the Ethos Reflection exercise; identified one of the five characteristics to reflect on and from within that characteristic selected a target to bring to life in their school.

*Target A4. Pupils of other faiths and world views who are members of the school community are welcomed into the life of the school as the board of management, principal and staff are aware of the importance of ecumenism and inter-religious dialogue and the place of encounter and learning from other traditions in Catholic education.*

*Upon evaluation it was agreed that we met this target and will continue to embed this target in our everyday practice moving forward. In addition for YEAR TWO- a new target was set, as per procedures for 2023/2024.*

**Target D3** The principal or the RE representative works with class groupings in planning the work for the year and this is clearly stated and communicated to parents, staff and the local parish as a basis for mutual understanding and a partnership approach.  
**This Goal was evaluated at the end of the school.**

*June 2023: A mind map of the Ethos and goals as shared with parents was documented and circulated among the school community. It is available on Aladdin and our website –[www.stmichaelsholyangels.com](http://www.stmichaelsholyangels.com)*

#### **Background and Context**

*In 2022/2023, all Catholic Schools were invited by the Patron to engage in a process which aimed to facilitate schools in ‘Understanding and Living the Ethos in a Catholic Primary School’.*

*In year one following consultation with the entire school community, we worked on and achieved the following “Pupils of other faiths and world views are welcomed into the life of the school.” We will continue to embed this into the life of our school.*

*For the school year 2023/2024, we agreed the following target would be implemented.*

**“Religious education is an integral part of the life of the school.”**

***Within this target the Religion content of the school year is communicated to Parents, the below information gives an overview of this:***

**Grow In Love:** *In our school, the Grow In Love Programme is adopted and adapted in all classes.*

*There are five levels to the curriculum, each level distinguishes four inter-related strands of the curriculum, i.e. Christian Faith, the Word of God, Liturgy/Prayer and Christian Morality. Together these four strands outline the knowledge and understanding, skills and processes, distinctive of learning in this curriculum area. The detailed statement of content for each of the four strands encourages a rich variety of approaches to teaching and learning that cater for the different needs of individual children. The strands are not discrete areas of learning as they overlap and interact to form a holistic learning experience for the child.*

*In the Senior school the programme it is adapted and used as a resource. The level used may vary from class to class and from year to year depending on factors such as age, ability, movement/not of pupils to another class, as well as whether/not pupils are being prepared to receive Sacraments. Additional resources e.g. activities on Liturgical Seasons are also completed throughout the school and the Mild Learning Disabilities Guidelines are consulted*

*Resources for the Liturgical seasons are made available to staff from the Diocesan Advisors for Religious Education. The monthly Memo received from the Education Secretariat are made available for teachers.*

**Prayer Space:** *Each class has a designated Prayer Space. This space creates an atmosphere conducive to prayer, incorporating symbols which help the pupils sense that God is present. Pupils can bring in objects for the space and take ownership of these symbols which may be changed regularly. A Sacred Space is also maintained in the Foyer area reflecting the time in the Liturgical Calendar.*

**Formal Prayers:**

*Every morning, lunchtime and home time some pupils join the Principal via the school's public address system in formal prayer. A monthly schedule of prayer is drawn up to provide diversity*

*The Principal opens each prayer with the Sign of the Cross in English, and concludes each prayer with the sign of the cross as Gaeilge  
The principal also includes other prayers in line with feast days and the Liturgical calendar.*

**Meditation**

*All pupils and staff stop all activity twice a week on a Monday and Wednesday just before lunchtime to meditate. Our Junior classes*

*meditate for about 5 minutes and our older students for 8 to 10 minutes. There's a great sense of quiet and calm throughout the school during this time on. Our students look forward to the time. They pre-empt it by getting themselves organized both physically within their space and within themselves. Lots of staff have found that an extra focus such as a candle, soft background music or an image on the whiteboard can be helpful for many pupils. All of our students are individuals and we will continue to respect their journey and experience of meditation and make it as meaningful as possible for them.*

### **Celebration of Feast Days:**

*The Diocesan Advisors produce activity packs at various times of the year highlighting Liturgical Seasons as well as key Feast Days. These packs are used across the school to prepare for and highlight the significance of the Feast Days (age and ability-appropriate). Stories and artwork play an important role at these times. Displays of some are featured on the main corridor at times of importance e.g. Christmas, St. Patrick's Day, Easter etc. and pupils work from across the school are included. A timetable for use of the Prayer Room is made available to staff. At Christmas time, all classes are invited to prepare a performance to share with the school community and parents/guardians are invited to this. The story of Christmas is told and/or acted out and songs depicting this time are performed by the pupils.*

*Where the school is open on Feast Days, e.g. the Feast of the Immaculate Conception on December 8<sup>th</sup> or the Feast of the Epiphany on January 6<sup>th</sup>, every effort will be made to arrange for Mass to be celebrated in school. A Mass is arranged to mark the beginning of the new school year which normally coincides with the Feast Days of St. Michael and St. Vincent de Paul.*

### **Prayer Room**

*The Prayer Room is a quiet space and is available for use at all times. All classes are encouraged to visit on the first Friday of every month and at other discretionary times throughout the year*

### **Partners in Religious Education**

*Parents/Guardians are the primary educators of their children and their role as religious educators is seen by the school as fundamental. It is important that parents/guardians actively encourage and promote children in attending mass.*

### **Home/School**

*Each year in St Michael's School we celebrate "Catholic Schools Week". This is advertised at Mass on the Sunday preceding it in each Parish and a display board is prepared. Parents/Guardians are asked to invite Grandparents to school (if possible) on a specified day. This day called "Grandparents Day" is a chance for parents/guardians to escort*

*their parents into our school and to visit their son/daughter's class. They are interviewed about topics such as their experience of being young, their life's journey etc. They may also be invited to complete an activity with their grandchild.*

*Parents/Guardians are invited to attend all Sacramental and preparatory celebrations as well as the Christmas performances. When the pupils are graduating at the end of each year, parents/guardians are invited to attend with other family members to celebrate their son/daughters time in our school. If possible, a representative will be selected to read a prayer/poem at this service.*

***As appropriate, the home links of the Grow In Love Programme should be used to inform and involve parents/guardians in the Religious education of the children.***

### ***School/Parish***

*Although our school is located in the Parish of Chapelizod, our pupils live in a variety of different Parishes around Dublin, Kildare and Meath. Thus, programmes for First Eucharist such as "Do This in Memory" and for Confirmation such as "You Shall Be My Witness" are mentioned to parents/guardians who can decide whether/not to investigate the availability of them in their Parishes and participate in them with their son/daughter. We work closely with the Parish Priest in Chapelizod during times of Sacramental Preparation and Celebrations, such as First Communion and Confirmation, as well as with the Vincentian Community/Priests who support us at all times during the Liturgical Year to celebrate Mass on Feast Days, to mark special occasions, e.g. School Leaver's Graduation, New School Year and to support pupils, staff and parents at times of Sacramental preparation and celebrations.*

### **Assemblies**

*At regular intervals the school community gathers to share good news. Each Assembly begins with a prayer service where pupils are active participants, leading with the Sign of the Cross and saying prayers.*

### **Pupils of Other Religious Traditions**

*St. Michael's School is an inclusive and welcoming environment, accepting and acknowledging pupils of all Faiths and none. Other religious traditions and festivals are celebrated throughout the school with displays and are announced over the intercom with pupils from other faiths invited to share prayers.*