

## **POLICY ON RELIGIOUS EDUCATION AND PARTICIPATION**

Milford National School is a Catholic school under the patronage of the Bishop of Limerick. The school models and promotes a Christian philosophy of life based on the Christian premise of love and respect for others.

The Mission statement of the school reflects the Catholic ethos:

### ***MISSION STATEMENT***

**We, in Milford National School, dedicate ourselves to providing a holistic education for our children, where potential and uniqueness of mind, heart, body and spirit are fostered and celebrated.**

**In achieving this ideal we aim to promote self-esteem, self-worth, self-confidence and a sense of belonging to our School Community.**

**It is our goal to provide a culturally rich and multi-faceted education, striving for academic excellence, while mindful of the diverse learning needs of all our children.**

Milford National School 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. Subject to the terms of the Admission Policy we enrol pupils of other faiths or no faith in the school and respect their beliefs and practices. Consultation with parents of these pupils takes place on enrolment, if the parents so wish. Each child is welcome to attend and benefit from the Catholic religious education programme. If parents have difficulty with this the class teacher will meet with parents to reach an acceptable accommodation of their child within the classroom, while mindful that all accommodations must be within a practical supervisory framework, i.e. the child cannot be left unsupervised. 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. The school cannot, however undertake to educate children of other faiths in their own faith, nor does it have the extra personnel needed to provide outside supervision during the religious education period. The Christian ethos pervades through the school and we as a staff try to give our pupils a strong sense of Christian values, placing a big emphasis on love and respect for others.

### **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 normally timetabled each day for one half-hour. A Christian ethos however permeates the entire school day and the whole life of the school.

### **Whole School Dimension**

Catholic prayers are part of the routine of the day. In each classroom there is an atmosphere of openness, forgiveness, and understanding.

The major Catholic and local feasts are celebrated. They may be marked with the aid of signs and symbols displayed in the classroom and school. The children’s art-work is also regularly displayed in the church.

- November : children remember loved ones - art-work in church and school
- Advent – the advent wreath
- Christmas – tree and crib and other art-work in school and church
- Feast of Don Bosco- pictures and art-work
- 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
- Pentecost – artistic depiction of the coming of the Holy Spirit
- Communion and Confirmation art-work displayed in church and classroom

**Liturgical celebrations are held on some occasions e.g.**

- The opening of the school year Mass
- 8<sup>th</sup> December Mass
- Carol service at Christmas
- Christmas Eve Mass and pageant- involving school band, choir and children
- Don Bosco Mass (feast day of patron saint)
- Times of trauma or crisis and for other occasions which from time to time are considered appropriate to celebrate or to mark.
- Incorporated into school assemblies
- Children’s Masses on Sundays once a month, involving the school band, choir and children

The pupils of the school join:

- At the celebration of First Communion and Confirmation
- School Mass at the beginning of the year, 8<sup>th</sup> December Mass, Don Bosco Mass
- Other liturgical celebrations in cooperation with the parish.

**Connecting with our Parish:**

The Catholic education offered in Milford NS is conducted in collaboration with the children’s parents and the local parish. We have a very close relationship and friendship with the Salesian community next door to the school. The Salesian priests are well-known to all the children and often visit classrooms. Opportunities are provided for:

Blessing of throats on the feast of St Blaize  
 Distribution of ashes on Ash Wednesday  
 Hearing of pupil confessions at Christmas and Easter  
 Support for the Communion and Confirmation classes  
 Celebrating feast days such as Don Bosco etc.

**Teaching Methodologies Used To Achieve Aims**

- Study of the Alive – O Catechetical Programme
- Interactive learning
- Giving children opportunities to perform music in church ceremonies
- Sacramental and non-sacramental liturgies
- Drama and role play for school and parish Masses and services
- Expression through the visual arts

### **Success Criteria**

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

- There is a good sense of community spirit where respect for all is evident at all times
- There are recognisable links between parish/home/school

### **Responsibility For Implementing This Policy**

The Board of Management in consultation with the Principal and the school staff are responsible for facilitating the smooth implementation of the policy.

### **Teachers and Staff:**

- Inform themselves through studying the Alive – O programme
- Deliver and teach the Alive – O programme appropriate to their class
- Cooperate with the Chaplain/ Parish and the Diocesan Advisers
- Avail of in-service support provided.
- Actively support the spirit and ethos of the school remembering that ethos is not taught but caught

### **Parents:**

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.

### **Principal:**

- Takes an active role in encouraging the whole school aspects of the programme and monitors progress throughout the school
- Liaises with the parish in the organisation and celebration of school, community and parish events

This policy review was ratified by the Board of Management at its meeting on October 20<sup>th</sup> 2011.