Religious Education Policy

ST.ENDA'S NATIONAL SCHOOL, LISDOONVARNA
JUNE 2013

St. Enda's National School is a Catholic school under the patronage of the Bishop of Galway, Kilmacduagh and Kilfenora, and is a constitutive part, and mission, of the Catholic Parish of Lisdoonvarna and Kilshanny.

The following is the formal schedule of the school and its operative mission statement:

"Saint Enda's National School, Lisdoonvarna, a Roman Catholic School (which is established in connection with the Minister for Education) aims at promoting the full and harmonious development of all aspects of the person of the pupil: intellectual, physical, cultural, moral and spiritual, including a living relationship with God and with other people. The school models and promotes a philosophy of life inspired by belief in God and in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The Catholic school provides religious education for the pupils in accordance with the doctrines, practices and tradition of the Roman Catholic Church and promotes the formation of the pupils in the Catholic Faith."

This religious education policy is for the benefit of all pupils, of every faith and of none, all of whom are cherished and esteemed pupils at this Catholic National School.

This school is inclusive and welcomes pupils of the Catholic faith, of other faiths and of no religious faith, subject to the full enrolment criteria. The school respects the beliefs and practices of each child in accordance with our ethos of inclusivity, welcome and mutual respect. However the school does not provide religious formation and education for faiths other than the Catholic faith. However, should the parents/guardians provide materials for the private study of another faith, the school will expect and direct such pupils to use these materials during the religious instruction period. Materials that promote good civic behaviour are also acceptable.

The Board of Management and teachers have adopted the *Alive-O* programme approved and recommended by the Catholic Bishops of Ireland for use in Catholic schools. This programme is taught for the recommended thirty minutes each day. The programme is taught to each class. In addition, the Catholic ethos is promoted through other curricula, events and activities which permeate the whole life of the school. The following list of examples is meant to be illustrative of the Catholic ethos rather than exhaustive:

- Priests, religious sisters, missionaries and the Diocesan Religious Education Advisors will visit the school regularly, especially the Parish Priest who serves as the Patron's representative, as member of the Board of Management, as Chaplain and as Minister of Pastoral Care to pupils, families and staff.

- Prayers in the classroom at the beginning and end of the day, Grace before and after meals.
- Mission Awareness initiatives and activities. Promotion of Justice, Peace, Ecology. Supporting *Trócaire*.
- Christmas traditions, trees and cribs *etc*, the religious significance of Christmas, nativity play, carol services, visits to local church for these purposes.
- Feast of St. Brigid –traditional craftwork of crosses from rushes.
- Feast of St. Blaise – traditional blessing of the throat.
- Feast of St. Patrick – depiction of story and shamrock, St. Patrick's Day cards, participation in the St. Patrick's Day parade.
- Lent – Symbols of repentance and reconciliation, visits of local clergy to school to distribute ashes and/or visit by pupils to the local church to receive ashes on Ash Wednesday.
- May devotions to Our Lady. The Rosary. Religious art.
- Easter – Easter traditions, the meaning of the death and resurrection of Jesus, artwork and worksheets. The significance of holy water.
- Observance of Holy Days of Obligation and special religious feast days.
- School Masses and prayer services at various times during the year.
- Family Masses throughout the year.
- Classes may visit the local church to understand religious symbols and rituals and to take part in Masses, services and sacraments throughout the year.
- The whole school takes part in the annual celebrations of the sacraments of Confirmation and First Communion. Confirmation is celebrated in the Church of Corpus Christi, Lisdoonvarna every second year for Catholic pupils in fifth and sixth classes. Children receive their First Holy Communion in second class in Lisdoonvarna Church. Children are prepared thoroughly in all aspects of these sacraments by the individual class teachers in keeping with the Catholic ethos and policies of the school. The broader parish community, represented by a trained team of volunteering parents, implement the '*Do this in Memory*' programme to prepare pupils for First Holy Communion and First Penance, and a corresponding team lead the '*You Shall Be My Witnesses*' programme to prepare pupils for Confirmation. Extra religious instruction may take place at certain times of the year to prepare children for such key religious events. This may involve an exchange of class periods between secular and religious timetabling which will be re-balanced subsequently.

The Catholic ethos permeates each school day and the whole school year, and underpins the entire philosophy of the school and its approach to the curriculum. This is grounded on Rule 58 of the "Rules for National Schools of An Roinn Oideachais, 1965", which, with the Education Act of 1998, governs Primary Education, and states: "*Religious Instruction is, therefore, a fundamental part of the school course, and a religious spirit should inform and vivify the whole work of the school.*" It is not possible therefore to always and entirely separate every child from every element of Catholic faith, practice and culture.

The school readily collaborates with parents and guardians who wish to withdraw their child from the religious education programme and from religious activities.

All teachers will be made aware of who is not to receive religious instruction.

In relation to the general consent given for activities which take place off the school premises, parents/guardians have the option of explicitly excluding visits to the church from their consent. This may sometimes require parents/guardians, whenever necessary, to collect their child in order to provide for their supervision during that period.

Parents/guardians who have chosen not to have their child participate in religious education and activities have the option of permitting them to remain present during the time allotted to religious education while studying their own faith and/or civics, or, alternatively, reading or working quietly on other activities.

Alternatively, parents/guardians may choose to remove their child from the class and provide supervision themselves during the period of religious education and activities. Close co-operation and good communication on an ongoing basis with the child's teacher are essential for this option to operate smoothly and to the satisfaction and benefit of all concerned.

The choices and commitments on the attached form are designed:

- to ensure that all parents and guardians are aware of the school's policies in this area,
- to ensure that the school is aware of the choices of parents and guardians,
- and to facilitate parents who wish to remove their children from specific religious instruction lessons or activities.

Date of next review: 2015-2016 school year

Ratification

This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on **10th June 2013**

Signed: _____ Signed: _____
Chairperson of Board of Management Principal

CHOICES AND COMMITMENTS REGARDING RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

As expressed in the official schedule and mission statement, St. Enda's National School is a Catholic school whose school plan is underpinned by its Catholic ethos. Our policy is that pupils and families of all religions, and of no religion, will always have their beliefs respected. In order to do this insofar as is practicable and to the best the school's ability, parents and guardians are required to communicate their choices here, and to make some corresponding commitments. These choices and commitments seek to respect parental choice in religious instruction while also respecting and protecting the Catholic ethos of the school. Please tick below to indicate your choices and commitments:

A

☐ I/we understand that St. Enda's National School is a Catholic school, with a Catholic ethos that permeates the whole life of the school, and I/we **DO** wish my/our child to be taught the *Alive-O* Religious Education Programme.

Signed: _____ *Signed*: _____ *Date*: _____
Parent/Guardian Parent/Guardian

OR

B

☐ I/we understand that St. Enda's National School is a Catholic school, with a Catholic ethos that permeates the whole life of the school, and I/we do **NOT** wish my/our child to be taught the *Alive-O* Religious Education Programme. *(Parents/Guardians who choose this option must proceed to read and complete the sections below.)*

(1) I/we understand that there is no compulsion on my/our child to be taught the religious education programme *Alive-O* or to take part in other religious activities.

(2) I/we understand that I/we have the right to arrange with the teachers for my/our child to remain present during the time allotted to religious education, while studying their own faith and/or civics, or, alternatively, reading, or working quietly on other activities.

☐ **I/we wish for our child to remain in the classroom during religious education.**

(3) I/we understand that I/we have the right to arrange with the teachers to take my/our child out of the class during the time allotted to the religious education programme or activity, returning him/her again after that period.

☐ **I/we wish to remove our/my child during religious education.**

(4) I/we understand that I/we may specifically *exclude* visits to the church from our general consent for activities which take place off the school premises, and accept that when necessary this may require me/us to arrange to collect our child for supervision during that time.

☐ **I/we wish to exclude my/our child from visits to the church.**

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Signed: _____ *Signed*: _____ *Date*: _____
Parent/Guardian Parent/Guardian