




ARCHDIOCESE OF DUBLIN

*DIOCESAN POLICY
FOR THE PROVISION OF
RELIGIOUS EDUCATION
FOR CATHOLIC PUPILS
ATTENDING SCHOOLS OTHER
THAN CATHOLIC SCHOOLS*

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"The definitive aim of Catechesis is to put people not only in touch with but also in communion and intimacy with Jesus Christ."

INTRODUCTION

In recent years there has been a small but steady increase in the number of Catholic children attending non-Catholic schools. To date, the religious instruction some of these children received has often been confined to a short period of preparation prior to the reception of Sacraments. Catechesis is a life long process. Diocesan policy emphasises the need for a comprehensive pastoral strategy to cater for formation in the faith of all children from Junior Infants to Sixth Class attending non-Catholic schools.

This document outlines the policy of the Archdiocese of Dublin on the provision of Religious Education for Catholics attending non-Catholic schools.

A Parents' Guide to *Living the Christian Life* is available from each Parish Baptismal Team as a resource for parents to be used before their child starts school.

At the back of this booklet are procedures for parishes entitled "*Guidelines for Establishing a Class*".

RESPONSIBILITY OF PARENTS/GUARDIANS

The home is the first Church which children come to know, in which they are reminded of God and helped to pray by what they see around them. Religion begins at home. Parents are the first Religion teachers and the most important of all teachers of Religion.

"It is the responsibility of parents to nurture the faith life of the child given at Baptism. Holy Baptism is the basis of the whole Christian life in the Spirit and the door which gives access to the other sacraments". (The Catechism of the Catholic Church).

"Parents are primarily and principally responsible for the education of their children" (Vatican II Declaration on Christian Education).

"Catholic parents have also the duty and the right to choose those means and institutes which, in their local circumstances, can best promote the Catholic Education of their children"... (Code of Canon Law 1983, Canon 793).

"Parents are to send their children to these schools which will provide for their Catholic Education. If they cannot do this, they are bound to ensure the proper Catholic Education of their children outside the school." (Code of Canon Law 1983, Canon 798)

ROLE OF PARISH

The whole Christian community is responsible for Catholic Education. The Christian community must help parents assume their responsibility of educating their children in faith and assist them in this. Catholic Education is a larger reality than Catholic Schooling.

ROLE OF SCHOOL

The Catholic school is an agent in the process called Catholic Education. The programme approved by the Bishops' Conference for use in Primary schools is the *Alive O* Programme.

ROLE OF PARISH PRIEST/PASTORAL COUNCIL

The Parish Priest "is to have a special care for the Catholic Education of children and young people". It is his responsibility "to ensure that those who ask for the Sacraments are prepared for their reception." Canon 528 (1)

Evangelisation and catechetical instruction should be in accordance "with the norms laid down by the competent authority." Canon 843 (2)

"The Church has a grave obligation to see to the moral and Religious Education of all its children" GE (7)

DIOCESAN POLICY FOR THE RELIGIOUS EDUCATION OF CHILDREN ATTENDING NON-CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

- The responsibility for the Religious Education of a child lies with the parish of domicile, i.e. with the parish in which the child and the child's parents live.

Religious Education is both instruction and formation in faith.

- Catholic Parents should register the names of children attending non-Catholic schools with their Parish Priest of domicile. This should be done when a child starts school. Religious Education will commence in Junior Infants and will continue in each class until completion of Sixth Class. It is envisaged that faith formation will continue at Post Primary level.
- Each Parish Council shall nominate a person/team to oversee the commencement of Catechesis.
- When a group of children is formed it will be necessary to engage a Catechist/Teacher with a Teaching Diploma in Religious Education. The Catechist will be a person of sound faith and a practising Catholic. The parents, having consulted with the Parish Priest/Pastoral Council, will engage the teacher's service on a self employed basis. Contributions from the parents should cover the remuneration of the Catechist.

- To ensure the efficient and smooth running of a programme of Religious Education, it is necessary for a meeting to take place between the Parish Priest/Pastoral Council, the Parents and the Catechist regarding the *Alive-O* Programme. This programme follows the Liturgical Cycle of the Church Year.

- The number of classes per year should be at least 35 one-hour classes, beginning in September.

- The importance of prayer will be highlighted and children should be encouraged to pray daily. Opportunity should be provided for them to take part in quiet prayer and meditation. They should learn skills which will enable them to reflect on and review their lives in the light of Gospel values.

- The witness value of parents to the Christian lifestyle enables growth in the life of the community. The Catholic way of life is nurtured through prayer and through participation in the sacramental life of the Church. True witness will lead to an outreach to people who are marginalised and disadvantaged in imitation of the life and example of Jesus.

GUIDELINES FOR ESTABLISHING A CLASS

What to do?

- Consult the Diocesan Policy.
- Parish Priest/Archbishop's House should be contacted to see if there are already classes organised in your area.
- If not 4-5 people will be needed to form a Committee to organise classes.

Where to go?

- Check availability of rooms in the parish or local school.
- Insurance is necessary, either school insurance or additional insurance.
- Ensure Child Protection Policy / Vetting is in place.
- Important to develop a working relationship with caretaker/keyholder.

Classes:

- Catechesis should commence when the child begins school.
- Two-year programme for Sacraments is essential.
- If a child does not attend enough classes or none at all and yet the parents wish the child to receive the Sacraments the Parish Priest may not refuse but may delay their celebration.
- If possible a priest should attend an information meeting in September for parents.
- Ideally classes should be supported through visitation.
- Financial help to cover expenses and materials in cases of necessity.
- There should be regular meetings between all the parties.

Teachers:

- Advertisement for the appointment of a suitably qualified teacher could be placed in all local schools, Churches, local newspapers, local shops and web.
- Persons who provide service to groups of parents seeking religious instruction for their children provide the service on a self-employed basis.
- An interview panel should be gender balanced and include a priest, an independent representative from the approved diocesan list and a parent.
- A list of criteria of selection should be established.
- Ensure interviewees understand their role in the classes, give them job description.
- Give teachers a roll book with child's name and dates of all classes.
- Give each teacher a list of children in their class and emergency phone numbers.
- Give each teacher a contact list for Committee and Parish Priest.

Enrolment:

- Type up enrolment form.
- Invite parents who are enrolling their children to bring a Baptismal Certificate.
- At enrolment have a separate desk and list for each class, e.g. 1st class, 2nd class.
- List should include name of child, parents' name, Baptismal Certificate, name of school and two contact telephone numbers.
- Secure **non-refundable** deposit from parents (€50.00 per child) to secure place.

Issues to be Addressed:

- ✓ Course to be covered.
- ✓ The number of classes that can be offered.
- ✓ Establish the remuneration for teachers.
- ✓ Establish materials, books and kits etc. that need to be purchased.
- ✓ Establish the content of what will be said at information meeting for parents, which should take place soon after enrolment.
- ✓ Establish what celebrations should take place during the Liturgical Year, cf Liturgical timeline.

Hold Information Evening:

- ✓ Give parents all the details about classes - day, time and dates.
- ✓ All enquires should be made through a named person (phone landline and mobile) and not to the child's school.
- ✓ Fee for the year.
- ✓ Reduced costs for second and subsequent children.
- ✓ Seek volunteers for supervision rota, one parent with a Committee member.
- ✓ Inform parents that there will always be two people on supervision duty, one Committee member and one parent.
- ✓ All educational issues to be discussed between parent and teacher.

Recommended Resources:

- ✓ Order pupils' books/workbooks/teachers kits if required.
- ✓ Buy CD player for each teacher.
- ✓ Work out supervisors' rota.

School Year

September:

- Make sure teachers have all they need.
- Ensure all parents know start date of classes.
- Give out supervisors' rota.
- Check to see if "Do This In Memory Of Me" Programme is in operation in the parish.

November:

- Establish where child will make First Holy Communion or Confirmation e.g. the parish of domicile or with local agreement, in the parish where the school is located.
- Organise Carol Service - book Church and Parish Centre for refreshments.
- Meet teachers to co-ordinate music and nativity play.
- Invitations.

January:

- Welcome back letter to parents with copy of dates of classes for January - June.
- Talk with teachers regarding Communion and Confirmation information evenings.
- Organise speakers for meetings.
- Book Church and room in Parish Centre.
- Organise refreshments for meetings.
- Send letter to parents informing them of dates.

February:

- ✓ Teacher signs Certificate of Attendance for each child as evidence of preparation for Sacraments.
- ✓ The appropriate time for the Sacrament of Penance is February.
- ✓ Choir, music and musician to be organised for First Confession.

May:

- ✓ Hold meeting for parental volunteers to form a "Holy Communion Committee".
- ✓ Refreshments for the day.
- ✓ Choir, music and musician to be organised for Holy Communion.

Sacrament of Confirmation:

- ✓ Each child to be confirmed needs a Confirmation name and a sponsor.
- ✓ Confirmation card (available from Veritas Bookstores) should be filled out for each child. This information is used to register the child's Confirmation in the parish of Baptism.