



Church of Ireland

United Dioceses of Cork, Cloyne & Ross

Ethos and Religious Education in Primary Schools in the Diocese Information for parents, guardians and applicants

This guidance is prepared in order to assist applicants for places in primary schools in the United Dioceses of Cork, Cloyne and Ross, in making an informed choice of school for their child.

You may be a newcomer to Ireland or be unfamiliar with the Church of Ireland. You may have been here a long time but have always had a question.

Therefore, in the first instance, you should read carefully the Ethos Statement of the school you are interested in. It sets out clearly what the ethos of a Church of Ireland school is.

This document provides some general information about:

1. The Church of Ireland, and
2. The school's religious education programme which is called *Follow Me*.

1. The Church of Ireland

The Church of Ireland:

- is a Catholic and Reformed church.
- is part of the worldwide Anglican Communion which has 80 million members in 164 countries.
- is an apostolic church, maintaining an unbroken link with the early apostles and drawing on the apostolic faith in its teaching and worship.
- is a church with three orders of sacred ministry - Bishops, Priests and Deacons.
- has services which follow an accepted liturgical form and structure.
- has one prayer book - The Book of Common Prayer (2004) - plus other services authorised for use by the General Synod.
- keeps a balance in doctrine and worship between Word and Sacrament.
- has the Holy Communion or the Eucharist as its central act of worship.
- is one church embracing Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.
- has 390,000 members - 275,000 in Northern Ireland and 126,400 in the Republic of Ireland.
- has two provinces, Armagh and Dublin, each with an Archbishop.
- has 12 dioceses, over 450 parochial units and over 500 stipendiary clergy

- is a representative church, with each diocese electing those who will represent them at the General Synod, the 'Parliament' of the church.
- has in its General Synod a House of Bishops which has 12 members and a House of Representatives which has 216 clergy and 432 laity.
- also has Diocesan Synods where representatives of the parishes meet usually once a year.
- has a parochial system where decisions at local level are made by Select Vestries in parishes whose lay members are elected each Easter by the people of the parish.

As an autonomous part of the worldwide communion of churches that call themselves Anglican/Episcopal, the Church of Ireland, for itself and in its relationships with other Christian churches, stands by and affirms what is known as The Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral - four key and foundational principles:

- A. The Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, as "containing all things necessary to salvation," and as being the rule and ultimate standard of faith.
- B. The Apostles' Creed, as the Baptismal Symbol; and the Nicene Creed, as the sufficient statement of the Christian faith.
- C. The two Sacraments ordained by Christ Himself--Baptism and the Supper of the Lord--ministered with unfailing use of Christ's words of Institution, and of the elements ordained by Him.
- D. The Historic Episcopate (bishops), locally adapted in the methods of its administration to the varying needs of the nations and peoples called of God into the Unity of His Church.

You will find more about the Church of Ireland in Cork, Cloyne and Ross here:

www.cork.anglican.org and also www.churchofirelandcork.com

You will find more about the Church of Ireland nationally here:

www.ireland.anglican.org

2. Religious Education

Religious Education is given an important position in the life of Church of Ireland schools and in the curriculum. Generally speaking all pupils in the school attend classes in religious education using a broad biblically-based curriculum devised in consultation with the Church of Ireland's ecumenical partners known as *Follow Me*.

The Church of Ireland religious ethos of the school is integrated in the entire life of the school throughout the teaching day, in all activities of the school, and throughout the year. The formal teaching of religious education is, however, restricted to specific times in the school timetable and pupils are entitled to opt-out of those classes.

The Religious Education curriculum *Follow Me*¹ was developed by the Church of Ireland together with the Methodist and Presbyterian Boards of Education. It is constructed using the same framework of strand units found in the rest of the curriculum and can facilitate

¹ Guidance about *Follow Me* has kindly been provided by Jacqui Wilkinson, Lecturer in Religious Education Church of Ireland Centre, DCU (Editor *Follow Me* programme)

the integration of Religious Education with other curricular areas within the day to day life of the school.

The aims of the Follow Me programme are to enable children:

- to develop a knowledge and understanding of beliefs, worship and witness of the Christian faith, and in particular of the Church of Ireland and other principal reformed traditions;
- to explore the biblical witness to God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit;
- to develop their own religious beliefs, values and practices through a process of personal search and discovery; and
- to develop an awareness of and a sensitivity towards those of other faiths and none.

There are seven strands in the Follow Me programme:

1. Celebrations, festivals, ceremonies and customs
2. Sacred writings, stories and key figures
3. Beliefs
4. Sacred places, worship and symbols
5. Moral values and attitudes
6. Personal Search – The natural world, relationships and moral values, ultimate questions
7. Awareness of those of other faiths and none

As children progress through primary school they begin to reflect on the beliefs and faith of Christians. They are encouraged to consider ultimate questions and in senior classes, as part of the Personal Search strand of the programme, to reflect on some ethical and faith issues that may be relevant to them. An awareness of and a sensitivity towards those of other faiths and none is emphasised and is one of the four aims of the Religious Education programme.

Prayer is a key component of the Religious Education lesson, these prayers vary from formal prayers as may be heard in church to class or individually composed prayers. Other aspects of the programme include music, church visits, visits of the parish clergy to the classroom and some exploration of church services and worship. Parish school links are encouraged and the Follow Me programme provides many opportunities for these links to be strengthened. Many schools have weekly whole school Assemblies using prayers, songs and stories. Many of these are found in the Follow Me programme and more are being developed to support class led assemblies.

When pupils leave sixth class it is hoped that they will have enjoyed Religious Education and that the activities, exploration and questioning that are so much part of the subject will increase their knowledge and understanding of the Christian faith.

More information about *Follow Me* is here: www.followme-series.org