Religious Education in the Primary Curriculum

The Catholic religious education curriculum contributes to the specific aims and general objectives of the Primary School Curriculum (see PSC, Intro, p. 34) as follows:

1. Religious education “enables the child to live a full life as a child and to realise his or her potential as a unique individual” (PSC, Intro, p. 7).

   Religious education:
   - enables children to develop spiritual, moral and religious values and is concerned with how religious knowledge, concepts, skills and attitudes, are integrated with the personal development and spiritual life of the child.
   - takes seriously the pupils' own context in the world in which they are growing up, and the necessity for structuring a programme of teaching and learning which takes account of their developing awareness, attitudes and abilities.
   - enables children to communicate clearly and confidently using a range of linguistic, symbolic, representational and physical expression.
   - develops children’s capacity for open-mindedness, aesthetic appreciation, creative expression and response;
   - promotes children’s emotional and physical development, health and well-being.
   - promotes children’s cultural development, cultural identity and cultural practices.

2. Religious education “enables the child to develop as a social being through living and cooperating with others and so contribute to the good of society.” (PSC, Intro, p. 7).

   Religious education:
   - develops interpersonal and intrapersonal skills, engendering a positive awareness of self, a sensitivity to others, self-discipline and responsible attitudes to self, others and the environment.
   - makes a significant contribution to inclusion and community cohesion, particularly in its focus on promoting respect for all.
   - supports children in developing and reflecting upon their values and their capacity for ethical judgement.
   - makes an important contribution to genuine pluralism, a respect for diversity and cultural difference, combating prejudice and discrimination, and the promotion of tolerance and interfaith harmony in society.
   - has strong associations with learning for citizenship, international education, creativity and care for the earth.
   - helps children to engage with challenging spiritual, moral and social questions that arise in their lives and society.
   - helps children consider how religious beliefs lead to particular actions and concerns in society.


   Religious education:
   - makes a significant contribution to children’s literacy skills, including the use of information and communication technology (ICT).
• promotes the ability to think critically, and evaluate their own and other’s views in a reasoned and informed manner, and to apply learning to new contexts.
• teaches children how to engage in independent and collaborative learning, as well as to develop skills that facilitate the transfer of learning.
• develops an appreciation of the value and practice of lifelong learning, which expresses itself in an enquiring mind and heightened curiosity.
• develops an ability to monitor and improve their own learning through setting goals and evaluating their own work.
• encourages interdisciplinary work.
• aims to facilitate the transition from primary to post-primary religious education.

Integration.
The Primary School Curriculum (1999) is founded on the principle of the integration of learning:
“For the young child, the distinctions between subjects are not relevant: what is more important is that he or she experiences a coherent learning process that accommodates a variety of elements. It is important, therefore, to make connections between learning in different subjects (PSC, Intro, p. 16).” Teachers will recognise the potential for valuable links between spiritual, moral and religious education and all other areas of the curriculum. Some cross-curricular links and opportunities for integrated studies are noted below.

1. Language and Literacy.
Religious education
• incorporates the use of listening and speaking as central learning strategies, providing opportunities for the enrichment and extension of children’s oral language.
• provides a treasure of rich and varied texts for oral language and reading development including sacred texts, stories, prayers, liturgical texts, poetry, historical narrative, parable, proverb, miracle story, psalm, wise sayings.
• develops a range of comprehension strategies, research strategies and problem-solving skills.
• enables children to compose and write their own stories and poems.
• enables children to understand the conventions of social language interaction in the domain of religion.
• enables children to express intuitions, feelings, impressions, ideas and reactions in response to real and imaginary situations, through talk, discussion and writing.
• enables children to create, develop and sustain imaginary situations through talk, discussion and improvisational drama.
• enables children to write in a variety of genres appropriate to school and outside needs (e.g. composing a class liturgy).
• enables children to use computer technology for information retrieval.
• will integrate with the following strands of the language and literacy curriculum.

Infants.
Strands. 
Oral Language.
Active listening to religious stories, poems, songs and rhymes.
Developing a religious vocabulary and syntax.
Asking questions and giving descriptions
Enjoying imaginative play with religious language (metaphor, allegory, symbol).
Discussing experience and new concepts: e.g. discussing religious/spiritual/moral issues and sustaining a conversation on a particular topic.
Sharing solutions and opinions: e.g. engaging in moral discussion and debate using arguments; identifying, debating and resolving moral dilemmas.
Sharing feelings and imagination: e.g. exploring and describing spiritual feelings, questions, experience and concepts.

Reading.
Enjoying listening to stories in RE.
Print-rich environment (children’s bibles, sacred space).
Responding to reading.
Comprehension skills.
Information retrieval skills.

Writing.
Oral language and writing: hearing religious stories and songs and drawing/writing about them
Early writing: drawing a picture of a religious theme and writing about it.
Valuing children’s writing: seeing personal writing displayed in prayer corner/sacred space.

First and Second.
Strands.

Oral Language.
Active listening to religious stories, poems, songs and rhymes.
Developing a religious vocabulary and syntax.
Asking questions and giving descriptions
Enjoying imaginative play with religious language (metaphor, allegory, symbol).
Discussing experience and new concepts: e.g. discussing religious/spiritual/moral issues.
Sharing solutions and opinions: e.g. engaging in moral discussion and debate; identifying, debating and resolving moral dilemmas.
Sharing feelings and imagination: e.g. Exploring and describing spiritual feelings, questions, experiences and concepts.

Reading.
Enjoying listening to reading stories in RE.
Responding to reading: e.g. Recalling and relating a simple religious story, asking questions, role-playing; relating characters, situations and story details in religious stories to personal experience; reading a phrase/line from a scripture story aloud.
Comprehension skills: e.g. retelling a scripture story in sequence; predicting future incidents and outcomes in religious stories.
Information retrieval skills.

*Writing.*
Oral language and writing: hearing religious stories and songs and drawing/writing about them
Early writing: drawing a picture with a religious theme and write about it.
Writing genres: writing a prayer/poem; drawing and writing stories and poems. Writing a version of a religious story told by the teacher.
Explore different genres: parable, psalm, prayer.
Personal experience and choice: writing about spiritual experiences, writing about my baptism, my communion.
Responding through writing: listening to the spiritual experiences of others and expressing reactions to them in writing.
Valuing children’s writing: having personal writing displayed in prayer corner/ sacred space.
Spelling moral and religious terms.

**Third and Fourth Classes.**
*Strands*

*Oral Language.*
Enjoying religious language.
Performing social functions: e.g. expressing appreciation of others’ gifts and talents; engaging respectfully with a child of another religious faith.
Exploring religious story and poetry: e.g. taking the perspective of people in texts: telling the Easter story from the point of view of Mary.
Discussing religious experiences: e.g. asking questions about existential issues and spiritual concerns: who are we? Where are we? What’s wrong with the world? What’s the solution?
Discussing religious/ethical issues, concerns and new concepts: e.g using explanations to inform, clarify and elaborate: explaining the significance of a Church practice such as fasting, mass on Sunday, praying the rosary.
Sharing solutions and opinions: e.g. identifying, debating and resolving moral issues; justifying moral choices made.
Sharing feelings and imagination: e.g. using mime to convey religious ideas, reactions, emotions, desires and attitudes.
Active listening: to religious narratives, poetry, song; listening to a presentation on another religion and deciding which are the most important questions to ask.
Experiencing a more challenging religious vocabulary.

*Reading*
Enjoying listening to reading in RE.
Reading genres: religious texts; fables and moral tales.
Responding to reading of moral/religious texts.
Using comprehension strategies in relation to religious texts: e.g. creating a web to represent the relationships between characters in a story; creating a story-map of a story to demonstrate a sequence of events; completing a point-of-view activity about one of Jesus’
teachings in the role of for example, a widow, Roman soldier, disciple, tax collector. Developing information retrieval skills in relation to projects in RE, e.g. choosing relevant scripture readings for a class mass or liturgy.

Writing.
Oral language and writing: experiencing a rich religious vocabulary as part of the preparation for writing.
Writing genres: prayer, lists, journaling, poems, moral tales, writing a scripture story in his/her own words.
Personal experiences and choice: writing about spiritual, moral and religious experiences in diary form.
Responding through writing to religious stories/poems.

Fifth and Sixth Classes.
Strands.

Oral Language.
Enjoying religious language.
Performing social functions related to religion: e.g welcoming visitors of another faith community, practising appropriate conduct when visiting a place of worship; practising effective interpersonal skills in order to relate to others in peaceful, tolerant, and non-discriminatory ways.
Exploring religious story and poetry.
Discussing religious experiences.
Discussing religious issues, concerns and new concepts; e.g discussing injustice, discussing the value of moral maxim, discussing plays, films and television programmes in the light of Christian values; generating hypotheses and explanations related to religious concepts and beliefs—life after death, inter-religious dialogue, violence and war.
Sharing feelings and imagination: e.g using mime to convey religious ideas, reactions, emotions, desires and attitudes.
Active listening: e.g. to narratives, radio broadcasts, visitors from other religions; following detailed instructions on the creation of a class liturgy; giving detailed instructions or directions for a class.
Developing a more complex religious vocabulary and sentence structure: e.g. discussing the meaning and origin of religious words with the teacher.

Reading.
Enjoying listening to reading in RE.
Reading genres: e.g. textual features of biblical texts: sequence of events, plot, characterisation, imagery, metaphor, simile, allegory, repetition, contrast, symbols, messages, grammatical features, biblical referencing system.
Responding to reading texts: e.g. developing critical reading and viewing skills – looking at stereotyping, distortions and omissions in the presentation of old people in the media; examining on-line debates on religious issues; Fictional characters in literature can be evaluated for their personal moral qualities.
Using comprehension strategies in relation to religion texts: e.g. examining illustrations of Biblical stories; locating passages of scripture by book, chapter and verse; creating a concept map for a story; presenting variant or alternative positions to those of a biblical text (e.g. presenting the story of Jesus and the woman at the well with the woman as narrator).

Writing
Oral language and Writing: experiencing a rich religious vocabulary as part of the pre-writing process. 
Writing genres: e.g. prayer, lists, journaling, poems, stories, arguing the case in writing for a particular point of view (morality). 
Personal experiences and choice: e.g. keeping a journal. 
Spelling moral and religious terms. 
Responding through writing to religious stories, poems etc. 
Range of audiences: writing a Church bulletin, responding to the letters page in a Catholic newspaper, writing to seek information about a church or charitable organisation.

Religious Education
• provides opportunities to apply mathematical concepts and processes. 
• enables children to collect, classify, organise and represent dates in a variety of forms. 
• will integrate with the following strands of the mathematics curriculum:

Infants. 
Strand. Measures. 
Time: sequencing stages in a story, e.g. sequencing events in a scripture story when prompted by a computer programme; stating the order of what happens at a baptism.

First and Second. 
Strand. Measures. 
Time: significant dates in the liturgical year, e.g. identifying from the calendar the day of the week on which St. Patrick’s day occurs. 
Sequencing liturgical events using the vocabulary of time.

Third and Fourth. 
Strand. Measures. 
Time: putting seasons of the liturgical year in sequence; using calendars to work out dates in the liturgical year; using the internet to check the times of sunrise and sunset during Ramadan. 
Sequencing actions and activities in rituals e.g. Stations of the Cross, events in Holy Week, Baptismal signs. 
Exploring timelines; e.g. the story of Moses.

Fifth and Sixth. 
Strand Measures. 
Reading timetables: e.g. researching times of prayer of Irish Muslims during Ramadan.
Constructing time-lines for biblical events e.g. Hebrew Scriptures, Christian Scriptures, Time of the Church, The three great ‘moments’ of salvation history: creation, salvation, fulfilment; working out number of years between events; Developing timelines to illustrate important themes, e.g. timeline showing significant people who have worked for peace over history.
Making a timeline of the liturgical year.
Sequencing actions and activities in rituals e.g. steps in Confirmation.

Data.
Collecting, organising and representing data e.g pie-chart representing religious faiths in Ireland; trend graph showing amount of money given to Trócaire over a number of years.

3. Social, Environmental and Scientific Education.
Religious Education
- begins with personal experience, experience within family, the immediate environment of the child and then moves beyond to the local and wider communities.
- is concerned with the identity and role of the child in the local and wider community, with a sensitivity towards the way of life of other peoples, both locally and globally.
- promotes an ecological consciousness by helping children consider the origins and value of life, the interdependence of all things, and the importance of looking after the environment.
- “cultivates humane and responsible attitudes and an appreciation of the world in accordance with beliefs and values” (History, p. 5).
- “helps children learn about people, events, issues and cultural experiences which have helped shape the local community and environment” (History, p. 13).
- develops empathy with people from diverse environments and an understanding of human interdependence (Geog, p. 14).
- challenges use of imagination and evidence to reconstruct elements of the past (History, p. 13).
- develops a sense of responsibility for, and a willingness to participate in, the preservation of heritage (History, p. 13).
- helps children develop an understanding of time and chronology through timelines and storymaps.
- helps children research, record and use evidence for projects and to act as historians.

- will integrate with the following strands of the History curriculum:

  **Infant Classes:**
  **Myself and My Family**
  Exploring my baptism (using evidence: photographs, clothes, candle etc).
  Discussing how family members care for one another.
  Exploring celebrations in the family (using evidence: photos).

  **Story.**
  Stories about the lives of people from a range of religious backgrounds (communication).
  Discussing chronology of events in religious stories (time and chronology: (beginning, middle and end).
First and Second Class.

Strands: 

*Myself and My Family.*

Myself growing and changing (RSE in a Christian context).
Discussing religious family events (using evidence: baptism, first communion etc).
Feasts and festivals in the Past (Christmas, November and remembering the dead, local Christian festivals: change and continuity).

*Story.*

Stories about the lives of people from a range of religious backgrounds.
Discussion of sequences in stories (time and chronology).
Discussing cause and effect in stories.
Developing empathy: imagining and discussing the feelings of characters in religious stories.
Studying the lives of Christians who have made a contribution to local or national life.

Third and Fourth Class.

Strands: 

*Local Studies.*

Buildings, sites or ruins in my locality (local church, well, cemetery, monastery etc).
History of local Christian community.
History of the local school: story of the school’s founder.
Local places of pilgrimage.
Feasts and festivals in the past – religious festivals and customs celebrated by various members of the school and local community (Catholics, Muslims, Jews etc).

*Story.*

Stories from the lives of Christians or other religious figures in the past e.g. stories of Holy women in the Old Testament, story of Abraham, Mohammad.

*Early People and Ancient societies.*

Early Christian Ireland.
Life in first century Palestine. (Jewish religion, economic structure, housing, clothing, food, daily life and customs).
Moses, the Israelites and Egyptian society.
Irish Christian spirituality in the past (pilgrimages, Celtic spirituality, sacred places).

*Life, Society, Work and Culture in the Past.*

History of the local Catholic community.
History of other Religious communities in local area.
The Missionary Tradition in the Irish Church.
Examining Christian beliefs presented in art, architecture, and music in the past.

**Fifth and Sixth Class.**

*Local Studies.*
- Feasts and festivals in the Past: feasts and festivals of the major world religions.
- Feasts celebrated by locals of other religious faiths.
- Buildings, sites or ruins in my locality: exploring an old monastery, graveyard, mass path, mass rock, holy well.
- Schools: work of the religious orders;
- My locality through the ages: studying history of the parish/diocese; using parish records as evidence.

*Story.*
- Stories from the lives of Christians and others who have fought for peace, human rights and justice in the past (Gandhi, Nelson Mandela, Martin Luther King Jr.) or who have contributed to local/national, international life.

*Early people and Ancient Societies.*

*Continuity and Change over time.*
- Timeline of salvation history past, present and future (Time and Chronology).

- will integrate with the following strands of the **Geography curriculum**:

**Infants.**

*Human Environments.*
- Living in the local community: the local parish/es, priests, church building.

*Natural Environments.*
- Exploring creation.

*Environmental Awareness and care.*
- Exploring and respecting the environment.

**First and Second Classes.**

*Human Environments.*
- Living in the local community: how people in the parish work together, discussing my role in the parish community, ways in which we help others in the community, the work of the priest and others in the local community, those who work in the Catholic school.
- People and places in other areas: family faith life for other religious faith communities.
Environmental Awareness and care.
Understanding individual and communal responsibility for taking care of the environment.
Identifying strategies for improving and caring for the environment.

Third and Fourth Classes.
Strands. Human Environments.
Study of local parish community.
Church–based groups in the community (e.g. Vincent de Paul).
Learning about minority groups in Ireland.

Natural Environments.
Finding biblical locations on maps (e.g. Bethlehem, Nazareth, and Jerusalem).

Environmental Awareness and care.
Duty of Christians to care for the earth.
The value of every creature created by God.

Fifth and Sixth Classes.
Strands. Human Environments.
Study of religious faith communities in Ireland (Muslim, Jewish etc).
Ecumenical activity and interreligious dialogue.
Respecting and valuing diversity in the community.
Role of Christian community groups and organizations (e.g. Vincent de Paul, Trócaire).
People at work: profile of local Bishop.
Study of local Diocese and dioceses in Ireland.
Fair trade issues and development aid.

Natural Environments.
Maps of the ancient biblical world (e.g. 1st Century Palestine and surrounds, River Jordan, Sea of Galilee, vegetation, key towns and settlements).
Finding biblical and other religious locations on maps (e.g. Bethlehem, Nazareth, and Jerusalem; location of Mecca, Benares).

Environmental Awareness and Care.
The universal destination of earthly goods.
Stewardship.

• will integrate with the following strands of the Science Curriculum.

Infants.
Strands. Living Things.
Myself: RSE in the Christian Context.
Plants and Animals: exploring God’s creation.
Environmental Awareness and Care:
Caring for my locality: Exploring and respecting the environment: God’s world.

First and Second.
Strands  
*Living Things.*  
Myself: RSE in a Christian context.  
Plants and Animals: exploring God’s creation.

*Environmental Awareness and care*  
Caring for my locality; understanding individual and communal responsibility for taking care of the environment.  
Identifying strategies for improving and caring for the environment.

Third and Fourth.
Strands  
*Living Things.*  
Human life: RSE in a Christian context.

*Environmental Awareness and care*  
Examining the interrelationship of living and non-living elements of local and other environments.  
Duty of Christians to care for the earth.  
The value of every creature created by God.  
Appreciating the need to conserve resources.

Fourth and Sixth.
Strands  
*Living Things.*  

*Environmental Awareness and Care*  
Realising personal and community responsibility for taking care of the environment.  
Examining the interrelationship of living and non-living elements of local and other environments.  
Identifying how religion and science contribute positively to the use of the earth’s resources.  
Identifying some ways science and religion work together for the good of local and wider environments.

4. Social, Personal and Health Education:
Religious education  
- promotes self awareness, as children become aware of the spiritual and religious dimensions of their being.  
- offers a basis for self-esteem and self-worth in God’s love for every person..  
- teaches about the moral dimensions of life including relationships, diversity, and how to challenge prejudice, racism, discrimination, and bullying.  
- invites children to explore religious teachings on life, leisure, relationships and human sexuality, marriage and family life.
• enables children to make informed decisions and to express their own views in a respectful manner.
• enables children to recognize and name their own and other’s feelings and those of characters in stories.
• helps children become aware of and discerning about the various influences on choices and decisions (SPHE p. 10).
• develops social skills of communication, co-operation, and conflict resolution (SPHE p. 10).
• helps children to develop skills for meeting and encountering people whose beliefs, views and lifestyles are different from their own.

Citizenship.
Religious education
• develops children’s knowledge and understanding about the diversity of cultural and religious identities in Ireland and the need for mutual respect and understanding.
• offers opportunities to raise contemporary spiritual, moral, social, cultural and ethical issues in a local and global context and teaches children how to resolve conflict fairly.
• promotes respect for social responsibility, community cohesion, diversity and challenges religious prejudice, stereotyping and discrimination.
• enables children to develop communication skills essential to participation in public debate in a democracy.
• develops children’s knowledge of the positive contributions of religious groups to Irish society (SPHE, p. 10).
• Promotes the value of a just and caring society and helps children understand the importance of seeking truth and peace (SPHE p. 10).

• Will integrate with the following strands of the SPHE curriculum:

Infants.
Strands.

Myself:
Human dignity (morality: strand unit)
RSE in the Christian context (see Morality: strand unit).
Exploring God’s love as reflected in self.
Showing respect towards self.
Recognising my feelings.
Exploring creation through the senses.

Myself and Others:
Showing respect towards others and their property.
Identifying the cultural/ religious identity of others.
Respecting and responding to difference and diversity among peers.
Recognising the feelings of others.
Importance of using our gifts to help others.
Christians help the poor.
Stories that encourage awareness of others and respect for diversity and difference.
Understanding fair reciprocity.

Myself and the Wider World.
Social Teaching (see Morality: strand unit).
Christians respect and care for all creation.
Recognising and appreciating how people in the Church serve the local community.

**First and Second Classes.**

**Myself.**
- Human Dignity (morality strand unit).
- Human Freedom and Responsibility (morality strand unit).
- Exploring personal skills, abilities and achievements as well as personal limitations and weaknesses.
- Critically evaluating moral choices (making decisions)
- Respect for the body created by God.
- God’s presence with us as we grow and change.
- Identifying factors that promote spiritual growth and change.

**Myself and Others.**
- Social Teaching (Morality: strand unit).
- RSE in a Christian context (Morality: strand unit).
- Treating others with respect.
- Bullying and the sacrament of reconciliation.

**Myself and the Wider World.**
- Responsibility to care for God’s creation.
- Developing a sense of belonging to the local community.
- Appreciating the diversity of religious groups in the community.

**Third and Fourth Classes.**

**Myself.**
- Human dignity (Morality: strand unit).
- Human freedom and responsibility (Morality: strand unit).
- Understanding the call to develop their gifts and talents and to share them with others.
- Developing their understanding of freedom of choice, moral judgement and human responsibility (personal and social).
- Recognising their own limitations.
- Growing in understanding of their own growth, emotionally, mentally and spiritually.
- The human body dependent on God who gives and sustains life.
- Making decisions: exploring the motives and emotions that influence choices.

**Myself and Others.**
- RSE in a Christian Context (Morality: strand unit).
- Social Teaching (Morality: strand unit).
- Developing an ethic that respects, defends and promotes the rights and well-being of every person.
- Learning interpersonal skills in order to relate to others in peaceful, tolerant and non-discriminatory ways.
Appreciating that relationships involve response and responsibility.

*Myself and the Wider World.*
Researching other religious faith communities.
Investigating ways of welcoming and learning about and from people from other religious faiths in Ireland.
Environmental care.

**Fifth and Sixth Classes.**

Strands.  
*Myself.*
- Human Dignity (Morality: strand unit).
- RSE in the Christian context (Morality: strand unit).
- Reflecting on practices that support the values and ideals that are important to them
- Examining the cost and challenge of living morally
- Discerning and evaluating the values, attitudes and expectations with which they are surrounded in contemporary culture.
- As I grow I change *spiritually.*
- Examining how being religious influences decisions.

*Myself and others.*
- The Christian family.

*Myself and the Wider world.*
- Social Teaching (Morality: strand unit).
- Critically reflecting on the Media and popular culture from a Christian perspective.
  - Developing strategies to promote a more just society.
  - Examining the contribution made to the community by religious groups (citizenship).
  - Exploring inequality and justice issues (poverty, homelessness, prejudice, discrimination, stereotyping) and how they might be addressed.
  - Developing an understanding of the importance of ecumenical activity and inter-religious dialogue.
  - Learning about other world faiths.
  - Examining how religions co-operate together to work for social justice.