



RAHEEN NATIONAL SCHOOL

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Religious Education Opt-Out Policy

1. Introduction

Raheen National School operates under Catholic patronage. Religious education is an integral part of school life and forms part of the daily programme in each classroom. The school follows the Grow in Love religious education programme and prepares children for the sacraments of First Confession, First Holy Communion, and Confirmation.

The school respects the rights of parents/guardians who choose that their child does not participate in religious instruction. This policy outlines how such requests will be managed in a respectful, practical, and inclusive manner while maintaining the Catholic ethos and sacramental preparation responsibilities of the school.

2. Legislative Context

This policy is informed by the Education Act 1998. Under Section 30(2)(e) of the Act, a student shall not be required to attend instruction in any subject which is contrary to the conscience of the parent or guardian.

Raheen National School acknowledges and respects this right. At the same time, the school has a responsibility to uphold the characteristic spirit (ethos) of the school as determined by the patron. Religious education and preparation for the sacraments form part of the normal educational programme of the school.

This policy aims to balance the rights of parents/guardians with the practical organisation of the school and the Catholic ethos under which it operates.

3. Right to Opt Out

Parents/guardians may request that their child not participate in formal religious instruction. Such requests should be made in writing to the Principal.

The school will make reasonable efforts to accommodate this request in a manner that is respectful to the child and manageable within the normal organisation of the classroom and school day.

4. Religious Education in the School Day

Religious education may take place at a variety of times during the school day, including:

- Morning prayer at the beginning of the school day
- Evening prayer at the end of the school day
- Angelus prayer at 12pm daily.
- Hymns and choir practice
- Practice of prayers for the sacraments of First Confession and First Holy Communion
- Communion workbook activities
- Practice of prayers and preparation activities for the sacrament of Confirmation
- Confirmation workbook activities
- Designated religion lessons (12:00) using the Grow in Love programme
- Teaching of Bible stories and stories connected to the Catholic faith, including learning about saints, holy places, pilgrimages, and other aspects of Catholic tradition
- Learning linked to special times in the Catholic liturgical year, such as Remembrance Month (November), May as the month of the Rosary, Advent, Lent, and other significant religious celebrations
- Visits to the local church for Mass and sacramental practices
- Religious artwork and activities linked to sacramental preparation and religious themes

While there are designated times for religious education, religious themes may also arise naturally or incidentally during the school day through discussion, preparation, or classroom activities.

5a. Arrangements for Pupils Not Participating in Religious Instruction

Where a child is not participating in religious instruction, the following arrangements may apply:

- During hymns and choir practice, the child may be withdrawn to the support room and work on the IXL learning programme.
- During sacramental prayer practice, communion workbook activities, confirmation preparation activities, and Grow in Love lessons, the child may remain in the classroom and complete work on the IXL programme using headphones, readtheory comprehension programme or SPHE wellbeing workbook activities.
- During visits to the local church or school Masses, the child may be supervised in school or the activity may be home-linked where possible.

The school will also explore appropriate non-religious wellbeing activities as alternatives where suitable in order to provide variation during these times.

5b. Additional Parental Option

In circumstances where, despite the school's implementation of this policy, a parent/guardian remains concerned about their child's exposure to religious education within the classroom, the option is available for the child to be withdrawn from the school for the duration of the religious education lesson.

In such cases:

- The child must be collected from the school and removed from school property for the duration of the lesson.
- The child must be signed out via Aladdin or the school sign-out book in the office.
- The child must be signed back in upon return to the school.
- Responsibility for the child during this time rests with the parent/guardian.

This arrangement ensures that the school can continue to fulfil its obligations in relation to the delivery of the religious education programme while respecting parental choice.

6. Practical Limitations

While the school will make every effort to respect requests to opt out of religious instruction:

- It may not always be possible to completely avoid exposure to religious material within the classroom environment as much of the religious ethos is interwoven incidentally through the school day.
- Religious education forms part of the normal teaching programme, particularly in Second Class where sacramental preparation for First Confession and First Holy Communion is a core responsibility, and in Sixth Class where pupils prepare for Confirmation.
- Teachers will remain mindful and respectful of pupils who are not participating in religious instruction.

7. Role of the Teacher


The class teacher is responsible for delivering the religious education programme and preparing pupils for the sacraments where applicable.


Teachers will make reasonable efforts to:

- support pupils who are **not** participating in religious instruction
- ensure alternative activities are provided where feasible
- maintain a respectful and inclusive classroom environment for all pupils.

8. Review of Policy

This policy will be reviewed periodically by the Board of Management to ensure it continues to reflect best practice, school ethos, and the needs of the school community.

Signed  (Chairperson) Date: 27/04/26

Signed  (Principal) Date: 27/04/26

Appendix A – Request for Withdrawal from Religious Instruction

Raheen National School

In accordance with Section 30(2)(e) of the Education Act 1998, parents/guardians may request that their child not attend religious instruction.

If you wish to request that your child be withdrawn from participation in religious instruction, please complete the form below and return it to the school principal.

Pupil Name: _____

I/We request that our child not participate in formal religious instruction in Raheen National School.

I/We understand that:

- Religious education forms part of the normal school programme in a Catholic primary school.
- The school will make reasonable efforts to accommodate this request.
- It may not always be possible to completely avoid exposure to religious content within the classroom environment due to the integrated nature of the school day and the Catholic ethos of the school.
- Alternative activities may be provided during religious instruction where practicable.

Parent/Guardian Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

School Use

Principal: _____

Date Received: _____