



Recognition of Qualifications to Teach Catholic Religious Education in Catholic Primary Schools on the Island of Ireland



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Introduction

The various programmes in Catholic Religious Education and Religious Studies provided by a number of colleges and universities and recognised by the Irish Episcopal Conference (IEC), Section C below, offer pre-service and qualified teachers foundational knowledge and skills for communicating the Catholic faith to children in primary schools. These programmes enable teachers and schools to address the many spiritual, social, moral, personal and religious opportunities and challenges facing pupils in contemporary Ireland.

Catholic primary schools should only employ teachers with an approved qualification to teach Religious Education in a Catholic primary school. The requirements set out below are effective from September 2011 forward, without prejudice to those who qualified as primary teachers prior to this date in any of the approved centres listed in Section C of this document. Principals, boards of management, selection boards and independent assessors should seek the assistance of their local diocesan education secretary, working with the Catholic Primary Schools Management Association, in implementing this important IEC policy document.

The Council for Catechetics, on behalf of the Irish Episcopal Conference, through this approval process, deems that the approved programmes (listed below in Section C, p. 13) all present a summary of the Catholic faith which enables teachers to teach it in a child-centred, developmentally appropriate manner, while simultaneously exploring issues surrounding Catholic identity, inter-culturalism, religious diversity and the importance of promoting respect for all.

The Primary School Curriculum (1999) states that one of its purposes is to, *'enable children to develop spiritual, moral and religious values'* (p. 34). The curriculum also emphasises that among its general objectives it intends to develop a knowledge and understanding of the pupil's *'own religious traditions and beliefs, with respect for the religious traditions and beliefs of others'* (p. 36).

Religious Education makes a significant contribution to the holistic development of the primary school child and enables the child to develop ethically, spiritually and religiously. The curriculum also states:

'In seeking to develop the full potential of the individual, the curriculum takes into account the child's affective, aesthetic, spiritual, moral and religious needs ... Religious Education specifically enables the child to develop spiritual and moral values and to come to a knowledge of God' (p. 58).



The Catholic Preschool and Primary Religious Education Curriculum for Ireland (Veritas, 2015) reflects the provisions of the Irish Constitution, especially Articles 42 and 44, as well as the 1998 Education Act. The Religious Education programme in a Catholic primary school will be taught in accordance with the characteristic spirit or ethos of the school. Catholic Religious Education nurtures the faith of Catholic children and is grounded in the person of Jesus Christ, in scripture and in the teaching of the Catholic Church (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 5). It aims to initiate children into the fullness of Christian life and to enable them to flourish as human beings. It always reflects the freedom of the individual and the primacy of conscience. Catholic Religious Education explicitly supports and supplements other programmes in the primary school curriculum such as RSE and the Intercultural Guidelines (National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, Irish National Teachers' Organisation, Department of Education and Skills). *The Catholic Preschool and Primary Religious Education Curriculum for Ireland* complements other curricular areas such as Language and Literacy, SESE (History, Geography, Science), Arts Education (Visual Arts, Music and Drama) and SPHE. Catholic Religious Education also seeks to acquaint students with the inclusive, ecumenical and interreligious perspectives of the Second Vatican Council.

In this way the Religious Education programme in Catholic schools plays a pivotal role in the integration of all subjects in the primary school

curriculum by promoting the holistic development of pupils: intellectual, emotional, physical, ethical, spiritual, religious. This is done in a manner that mirrors the provisions of the Irish Constitution, the Rules for National Schools, the 1998 Education Act, and the CPSMA Handbook. Since 2015, the *Catholic Preschool and Primary Religious Education Curriculum for Ireland* provides the scope and sequence for religious learning, with clear signposts to the knowledge and understanding, experience, skills and processes to be engaged with at each level of the primary school. As such, it – along with the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (1992) and *Share the Good News: National Directory for Catechesis in Ireland* (Veritas, 2010) – provides the underlying rationale for Religious Education in a Catholic primary school.

The word ‘Catholic’ comes from the Greek adverbial phrase *kath’holou*, and means ‘according to the whole’, with connotations of inclusivity, universality and completeness. Accordingly, Catholic education seeks to promote knowledge and understanding of the Catholic faith tradition, while it simultaneously acknowledges, welcomes and accommodates pupils of other faiths and other traditions. The Catholic school is committed to the promotion of equality, respect and inclusivity as well as serving the needs of those on the margins of society. It also recognises that faith is always a free act and cannot be imposed. In addition it respects the right of every child to religious freedom and choice which has its foundation in the dignity of the human person (*Dignitatis Humanae*, 2).



The Catholic school particularly acknowledges that parents are the primary educators and therefore seeks to respect their wishes. Furthermore, the *Catholic Preschool and Primary Religious Education Curriculum for Ireland* and *Share the Good News* highlight the essential and complementary roles of home, school and parish in the education of young children.

In Catholic schools, Religious Education integrates the many branches of learning within the Primary School Curriculum (1999) into a multi-coloured mosaic; it embraces diversity as a Christian and educational value; it fosters respect for differences in culture and religion on the basis of the dignity of every human being, and it explicitly promotes a spirit of fairness, a concern for all who are in need, and the value of forgiveness in relationships.



'Religious education is a process that contributes to the faith development of children, adolescents and adults. Religious education helps people to develop religious ways of thinking, feeling and doing, which give expression to the spiritual, moral and transcendent dimensions of life and can lead to personal and social transformation. Religious education can also teach people to think profoundly, allowing them to make free and consistent choices in the way they live their religious, and other, commitments.' (SGN, 38)

General Principles

- Religious Education is a curriculum area in the Primary School Curriculum in both the Republic of Ireland and in Northern Ireland.
- Religious Education and ethical formation contributes to the integrated learning that is encouraged across the curriculum for primary school children in Catholic schools.
- In both jurisdictions the content of the curriculum for Religious Education in Catholic schools is the responsibility of the different Church authorities/patron bodies.
- Teachers seeking employment in Catholic schools are required to possess a relevant qualification which enables them to teach Religious Education in a Catholic school.
- The Irish Episcopal Conference, through its Council for Catechetics, seeks to work in partnership with degree awarding bodies in Ireland to ensure that third level qualifications in teacher education can be recognised by the IEC for the purpose of graduate

teachers being able to provide the Religious Education programme in Catholic Primary Schools.

- The academic freedom of the various universities and associated colleges providing teacher education programmes is fully recognised by the IEC. This important value allows universities and colleges to determine how they enable graduates of their teacher education programmes to meet the requirements set out in this document.
- The required qualifications can be provided as an integrated part of a concurrent or consecutive teacher education programme or as a separate or additional programme leading to a special award, or as a combination of both approaches. Thus the required teacher competencies can be part of a BEd (or equivalent qualification) or postgraduate award or a separate complementary award (in Religious Education or Theological or Religious Studies as appropriate) at certificate or diploma level.
- All awards made post 2011 should be at level eight or higher on the National Qualifications Framework (or equivalent for UK awards).

Criteria and Guidelines Concerning the Provision of Awards Required to teach Religious Education in Catholic Primary Schools

The study themes below, required to teach Religious Education in a Catholic School, are to be considered interactive and complementary rather than isolated and should be studied in a manner that encourages integration.

The requirements set out below were first made effective from September 2011 forward, without prejudice to those who qualified as primary teachers prior to this date in any of the approved centres listed in Section C of this document.



A: Undergraduate Qualification

For a teacher with an initial teacher education degree to be recognised to teach in a Catholic school they should have **one hundred and twenty contact hours*** in the area of Religious Education, to include an exploration of Catechesis and Catholic Religious Education, (hours of Religious Education and associated theological subjects, in the BED or other degree), and of Religious or Theological Studies (often taken in an additional certificate). The prescribed areas for study include:

I. RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Demonstrate knowledge, understanding and appreciation in a manner that indicates a professional approach to:

- The rationale and aims of Religious Education in Catholic primary schools in Ireland, including an understanding of the development of the child's linguistic, psychological, spiritual, ethical and moral readiness to engage progressively with their religious tradition;
- The Religious Education and ethical formation of Catholic pupils as set out in the *National Directory for Catechesis*, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* and the *Catholic Preschool and Primary Religious Education Curriculum for Ireland*;



- The current curriculum in Religious Education designated by the Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference, in this case, the *Catholic Preschool and Primary Religious Education Curriculum for Ireland*;
- The programme(s) and/or materials approved for use in Catholic schools (See <http://www.religiouseducation.ie/procedure-for-the-approval-of-catechetical-materials-in-catholic-education/>);
- The vision of the person, community and civil society embraced by the Catholic Church including the distinctive features of Catholic Education;
- Short and long-term planning for the teaching of Religious Education in Catholic primary schools on the island of Ireland.

II. THEOLOGY

Demonstrate knowledge, understanding and appreciation in the following fields of study:

- God: Faith, Creed and Trinity
- Jesus Christ and discipleship
- Scripture
- Prayer, Sacraments and Liturgy
- Ethics, Social Justice, Spirituality and Human Rights
- Church and Mission, Ecumenism and Inter-religious Dialogue.

These themes allow for inclusion of many current issues, such as social justice; peace and reconciliation; gender; ethics; ecology; equality; disability; sexuality; racial, cultural and religious diversity; citizenship.

B: Postgraduate Qualification

For postgraduate students to be recognised to teach in a Catholic school in Ireland they should have **fifty contact hours*** at postgraduate level in the area of Religious Education, to include exploration of Catechesis and Catholic Religious Education and Religious or Theological Studies (hours within the Graduate Diploma, or other degree). Areas to be studied should include:

I. RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Demonstrate knowledge, understanding and appreciation in a manner that indicates a professional approach to:

- The rationale, aims, and short and long-term planning involved in Religious Education in Catholic primary schools in Ireland;
- *The National Directory for Catechesis*, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, the *Catholic Preschool and Primary Religious Education Curriculum for Ireland* designated by the Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference and the programme(s) and/or materials approved for use in Catholic Schools (See <http://www.religiouseducation.ie/procedure-for-the-approval-of-catechetical-materials-in-catholic-education/>);



- The vision of the person, community and civil society embraced by the Catholic Church, including the distinctive features of Catholic Education.

II. THEOLOGY

Demonstrate knowledge, understanding and appreciation in the following fields of study:

- God: Faith, Creed and Trinity
- Jesus Christ and Scripture
- A minimum of one of following four modules (depending on the Provider and its resources):
 - » Prayer, Sacraments and Liturgy
 - » Spirituality and Morality
 - » Church, Mission and Ecumenism
 - » World Religions

C: Approved Qualifications

The Catechetics Council currently (January 2018) recognises the following providers of this programme in Religious Education/Religious Studies, or its equivalent, as outlined above:

DCU Institute of Education (St Patrick's Campus)

- Certificate in Religious Studies (CRS) in conjunction with Catholic Religious Education in the BEd
- Certificate in Religious Studies in conjunction with Catholic Religious Education in the PMEP
- Certificate in Religious Studies (part-time)
- Catholic Certificate in Religious Studies Supplementary (in fulfilment of Appendix A of this document for those in possession of a CCRS from the Bishops of England and Wales)

Froebel College/St Patrick's College, Maynooth

- Certificate in Catholic Religious Education and Theological Studies as part of BEd
- Post-Graduate Certificate in Catholic Religious Education and Theological Studies as part of PMEd

Hibernia College

- Certificate as part of PME

Marino Institute of Education

- The Certificate Course as part of the BEd
- The Certificate Course as part of the PME

Mary Immaculate College

- Certificate in Religious Education in conjunction with the BEd
- Qualification to teach Catholic Religious Education as part of the Professional Masters in Education (PME)
- Certificate in Religious Education (Graduate Programme)

St Angela's College, Sligo

- Certificate in Primary School Religious Education (part-time)

St. Mary's University, Belfast

- Certificate as part of BEd Primary
- Certificate as part of PGCE (Postgraduate qualification)

Historically: University of Coleraine, Certificate in Religious Education. Those whose teaching qualification emanates from providers other than the ones named above should consult with the National Director for Catechetics (address below).

To ensure that the highest academic standards prevail, all approved programmes are continually reviewed by suitably qualified external examiners, appointed in accordance with the academic procedures in each of the respective universities and colleges. For the purposes of this recognition process, new or reaccredited programmes will be provided with an assessor nominated by the Catechetical Council. This assessor should be consulted and may advise on changes to ensure conformity with the requirements of this document. The assessor will report to the Catechetics Council on completion of the consultation.

Institutions wishing to apply for recognition of their programmes must send details (course outlines, learning outcomes, contact hours and bibliographies) to the Council for Catechetics of the Irish Episcopal Conference.

Where substantial changes to a previously approved programme have been made, the programme should be re-submitted for approval through the process outlined above. Every five years a review of previously approved programmes will be undertaken. In the case where reaccrediting is required the assistance of an assessor, nominated by the Council for Catechetics, will be provided to help the university or college ensure conformity with this document.

For further information please contact:

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**The hours enumerated in this document are the number of hours recognised by the Catechetics Council. However some centres of provision offer more than the stipulated hours and this is to be encouraged.*

Appendix

Supplementary qualification to enable teachers qualified in England and Wales, who hold a Catholic Certificate in Religious Studies (CCRS), to teach in Catholic primary schools on the island of Ireland.

This appendix is intended to outline how teachers qualified in England and Wales, who have undertaken a Catholic Certificate in Religious Studies (CCRS) in England or Wales, can be enabled to obtain the supplementary qualification necessary to teach in Catholic primary schools on the island of Ireland.

The CCRS is managed and awarded by the Board of Religious Studies on behalf of the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales. It was introduced in 1991 to replace its predecessors, the Catholic Teachers' Certificate and the Certificate in Religious Education. For a list of recognised providers of the CCRS, please see <http://www.brs-ccrs.org.uk/index.php>.

The Council for Catechetics accepts that the CCRS covers what is required in Part II – Theology of the document, *Recognition of Qualifications to Teach Catholic Religious Education in Catholic Primary Schools on the Island of Ireland*. Those qualifying to teach Religious Education in Catholic schools on the island of Ireland also need to have the familiarity with the Irish context, methodology, and curriculum as set out in Part I – Religious Education of this document. The prescribed areas for study laid down are:

I. RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Demonstrate knowledge, understanding and appreciation in a manner that indicates a professional approach to:

- The rationale and aims of Religious Education in Catholic primary schools in Ireland, including an understanding of the development of the child's linguistic, psychological, spiritual, ethical and moral readiness to engage progressively with their religious tradition;
- The Religious Education and ethical formation of Catholic pupils as set out in the *National Directory for Catechesis* and the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*;

- The current syllabus/curriculum in Religious Education designated by the Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference, the *Catholic Preschool and Primary Religious Education Curriculum for Ireland*;
- The programme(s) and/or materials approved for use in Catholic Schools (See <http://www.religiouseducation.ie/procedure-for-the-approval-of-catechetical-materials-in-catholic-education/>);
- The vision of the person, community and civil society embraced by the Catholic Church including the distinctive features of Catholic Education;
- Short and long term planning for the teaching of Religious Education in Catholic Primary schools on the island of Ireland.

As eighty hours have been undertaken as part of the CCRS, forty contact hours need to be completed in order to fulfil the requirement that those recognised to teach Religious Education in a Catholic school should have one hundred and twenty contact hours in the area of Religious Education and of Religious or Theological Studies. Given the practical pedagogical nature of the supplementary qualification, it should be delivered face-to-face.





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