

Special Education Curriculum Guidelines



The general Religious Education curriculum identifies relevant learning opportunities that are suitable for children with mild general learning disabilities. However, it is envisaged that teachers will engage in a planning process and adapt and interpret the curriculum guidelines to take account of the diversity in aptitudes and interests among these students. They are likely to adopt a similar approach in teaching the other subjects in the curriculum.

There is a group of students – those with low incidence disabilities – including those with moderate, severe and profound general learning disabilities who have very individual learning needs. The special Religious Education curriculum is aimed at meeting the needs of these students.

These guidelines deal with presenting meaningful religious experiences for young people at the foundation stages of learning. The needs of these students can be varied and complex. Lessons for these young people need to take account of their strengths and interests. Active participation needs to be encouraged in the learning process.

The Curriculum Guidelines for teachers of students with mild, moderate, severe and profound general learning disabilities (NCCA, 2007) provide interesting strategies for teachers to use when working with this group of students. However, in keeping with the NCCA aims, where it is stated that their educational experience should reflect what is available to their peers, teachers are encouraged to plan and find a suitable entry point for each student. Teachers can also revisit various themes and incorporate a different and more age-appropriate range of materials that take account of the maturity of older students.

Guided by the approach taken by the *NCCA Curriculum* content is presented in three bands (NCCA, 2007 5):

Attending Band	Responding Band	Initiating Band
This band is suitable for students who are in the very early stages of awareness of their immediate environment.	This band is suitable for those young people who appear to show interest in their environment but who still need adult prompting and guidance.	This band is suitable for students who are beginning to take control of their own environment, develop curiosity and initiate activities and communication.

The bands above are designed to provide a framework within which teachers can identify the level of functioning of young people and to structure learning activities that take account of these levels. Age appropriate opportunities should be a consideration of teachers when planning material and resources.

While these students may have complex learning needs it is important that the learning experience that they receive in religious education matches that afforded to their peers without disabilities.

Students at the early stages of learning may begin to explore the world of religion in terms of special people, books, times, places and objects and by visiting their local church. They will listen to and talk on various religious stories. They will be introduced to religious signs, symbols and words. They will experience a number of religious celebrations and practices. They may reflect on the wonders of God's world.

Curriculum Planning

The introduction to the *Primary School Curriculum* (NCCA, 1999) reminds schools that a continuing process of reflection, self-evaluation, review and innovation is necessary to realise the optimum learning experience for all students and in particular for those with special educational needs. Many students with SEN have very individualised learning needs. Religious education provides opportunities where teachers can structure individual lessons but as a subject it also lends itself quite readily to the promotion of group activities.

Choosing and Using Resources

It is important that the teacher collects a range of items and materials for lessons. These are likely to:

- Arouse interest
- Evoke pleasure
- Elicit curiosity and surprise
- Provide pleasurable experiences
- Provide opportunities for communication
- Promote an awareness of sharing with others
- Provide opportunities to explore the good things that God has given us to enjoy in this world.

The children are helped in lessons to realise that the world is full of beautiful things for them to enjoy. They are therefore helped to smell flowers, spices, scents of different kinds. They are helped to touch objects of different texture. They are assisted to look at objects of different colour. The children are helped to realise that certain colours and objects are associated with special occasions and feasts throughout the year. The children are given the opportunity to listen to music, different sounds and to respond accordingly. Foster a sense of delight among the students in all of the beautiful things that they come across in this world.

The children are given a clear message in lessons that God has given us many nice things in this world and that he wants us to enjoy and explore them. He has given these things to us because he loves us and he wants us to be happy.

Provide opportunities for the children to see objects associated with worship such as candles, altar cloth, crucifix and incense. They are also helped to realise that many of the stories that are read to them come from the Bible. These objects are given a special place in the classroom and the children are helped to regard them with reverence.

The children are introduced to key words and imagery used to describe God through speech, sign, symbol and gesture. The students are provided with an opportunity to listen to and participate in stories that demonstrate that God loves them.

Meeting for Worship

The children are encouraged to experience different forms of worship in an educational context. Class or whole school assemblies should be used for this purpose. Regular visits to the church should be facilitated. Prayer and worship can take many forms: meditation, listening to God's word, giving praise, giving thanks, saying sorry, prayer through drama, dance, movement and song. Different forms of worship used on a regular basis allow for a meaningful spiritual experience for the children.

Christian Faith

AIMS

Children will:

- become aware of the presence of God
- develop awareness that God is the creator of all things
- know that all good things come from God
- know that God loves us and wants us to be happy
- become aware that Mary is the mother of Jesus
- develop awareness of how we can honour Mary
- develop knowledge of Jesus, God's own Son.

Attending The child should be enabled to:	Responding The child should be enabled to:	Initiating The child should be enabled to:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • listen to stories about God and Jesus. • attend to a variety of beautiful things. • listen to stories that illustrate God's love for everyone. • listen to stories about Mary the mother of Jesus. • attend to prayers and hymns to God, Jesus and Mary. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • show interest and respond to stories about God and Jesus. • respond appropriately to a range of beautiful things in their surroundings. • show an awareness of God's love for everyone. • show interest in stories about Mary the mother of Jesus. • participate in praying and singing to God, Mary and Jesus. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • talk about God and Jesus. • thank God for beautiful things. • communicate about how God shows his love for us. • talk about Mary the mother of Jesus. • seek out opportunities to give praise to God, Jesus and Mary in prayer and in song.

Word of God

AIMS

Children will:

- become aware that the Bible is a special book about God
- develop awareness that the Bible contains writings about God
- develop a sense of God's love from listening to readings from the Bible
- show reverence for the Bible as God's Word
- understand that Jesus is the most important person in the Bible, God's own Son.

Attending The child should be enabled to:	Responding The child should be enabled to:	Initiating The child should be enabled to:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • listen to stories/texts from the Bible. • listen to and explore sensory artefacts associated with short stories/texts read from a children's' Bible. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • listen to and show an interest in sensory artefacts associated with Bible stories/texts. • participate in simple dramas and improvisations based on Bible stories/texts. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • independently seek out the reading of Bible stories/texts by locating appropriate sensory artefacts. • show engagement with and follow the story line of certain Bible stories/ texts.

Suggested Bible Texts

- The Annunciation
- The Journey to Bethlehem
- Jesus is born
- The shepherds
- The Wise Men bring presents
- The Last Supper
- The Story of Creation
- Jesus Calms the Sea
- The Story of the Loaves and Fishes
- The Daughter of Jairus
- The Wedding Feast at Cana
- Jesus Loves the Children
- The Passion
- The Crucifixion
- The Resurrection
- Pentecost

Liturgy and Prayer

In this strand the pupils will be looking at the ways in which faith is celebrated, and how this can take different forms. They will explore different liturgies and different sacraments. They will learn about the significance of these celebrations/rituals for believers.

AIMS

Children will:

- learn how to pray
- experience a number of Christian celebrations
- experience being in a church
- experience sensory associations with various celebrations
- listen to and explore a number of Bible stories that are associated with Christian celebrations and events
- be given an opportunity to see and touch objects associated with prayer and celebrations
- develop a familiarity with prayer (formal and informal)
- experience what it means to say sorry to God and Jesus
- participate in the Sacrament of Penance
- participate in the Sacrament of the Eucharist
- participate in the Sacrament of Confirmation.

Attending The child should be enabled to:	Responding The child should be enabled to:	Initiating The child should be enabled to:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • develop an awareness of objects that have a religious significance e.g. candle, crucifix, church, incense. • become aware of the smells, sounds and sights that are associated with different celebrations throughout the year. • observe new life in the growth of flowers, new leaves, and in the birth of new babies. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • show and name objects that have a special religious significance: candle, cross, Holy Communion. • show interest in smells, sounds and sights that are associated with different celebrations throughout the year. • respond to and display awareness of signs of new life in the environment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • manipulate with a sense of care and reverence religious objects such as: a crucifix, a baptismal candle, a children's Bible. • recognise certain smells, sounds and sights that are associated with different religious feasts and celebrations throughout the year. • show curiosity about signs of new life in the environment.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • notice changes in the immediate environment throughout the year. • develop an awareness that s/he can exert control over choice of stories, prayers, songs. • develop awareness and understanding of and participation in Christmas celebrations through the use of carols, Advent calendars and Advent wreaths. • develop awareness that the birth of Jesus was a very special occasion. • participate in a nativity play. • touch and look at the figures in a crib. • develop awareness that Christmas is a time for giving and receiving cards and presents. • buy, cook, taste and smell Christmas foods. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • show an awareness of changes that are taking place in and outside the classroom throughout the school year. • with some prompting and choice making, select prayers, stories and songs. • develop awareness of objects, music and symbols that are associated with various feasts throughout the year: St Patrick's Day, Easter, Advent. • show interest in the story of the birth of Jesus. • with assistance and encouragement participate in a nativity play. • with prompting identify the various figures in the crib. • show awareness that Christmas is a time for giving and receiving presents. • participate in buying, cooking, smelling and tasting Christmas foods. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • independently communicate and explore changes that are occurring in the environment. • co-operate with an adult or other students in saying prayers either verbally or performing gestures. • understand that objects, symbols and music have specific relevance for certain religious feasts and occasions. • demonstrate a recollection of the story of the birth of Jesus Christ • have the opportunity to participate and assume a role in a nativity play. • show ability to name the figures in a crib. • participate in the giving and receiving of presents at Christmas, at birthdays and at Mothers'/Fathers' day. • independently or with assistance participate in the cooking of different foods.
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • have opportunities to experience darkness and light. • participate in awareness of Easter by making Easter eggs, eating hot-cross buns, lamb and mint sauce. • have experience of saying sorry to God and Jesus. • receive Jesus in the Eucharist. • receive the gifts of the Holy Spirit in the Sacrament of Confirmation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • show awareness of an understanding of darkness and light. • develop awareness of signs and symbols associated with Easter: crucifix, Paschal candle, hot-cross bun. • develop an awareness of saying sorry to God and Jesus in prayer and in song. • show awareness that Jesus is present in the Eucharist. • show interest in the gifts associated with the Sacrament of Confirmation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • experiment with activities that allow for the creation of darkness and light. • show an awareness that certain objects, music and symbols are associated with Easter: a crucifix, an Easter egg or a Paschal candle • independently or with assistance say sorry to God and Jesus. • demonstrate a willingness to receive Jesus in the Eucharist. • participate in the preparation and the reception of the Sacrament of Confirmation.
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Prayers

- Sign of the Cross
- Act of Sorrow
- Our Father
- Hail Mary
- Grace before and after meals
- Prayer before and after Communion

Note

- Focus on the fact that birthdays are often celebrated as part of a community.
- Help the children to understand that Christmas is synonymous with the birth of one special baby – Jesus.
- Make celebration of achievement an integral part of the school year for the children.
- Provide opportunities for the students to share in and participate in group activities.
- Help the children to realise that there are people in the world who care for us and that God cares for everyone.

Christian Morality

AIMS

Children will:

- ask and respond to questions about their own and other's experiences and feelings
- listen to stories that reflect Christian moral virtues and values
- develop an understanding of right and wrong behaviour
- explore God's unconditional love
- develop self-esteem and respect for others
- express feelings by vocal/gesture means
- engage in interaction with adults and other children
- realise that everyone has the right to say 'yes', 'no' and 'maybe'
- have an awareness of belonging to a 'class' or to a 'group'
- show respect for other people's possessions.

Attending The child should be enabled to:	Responding The child should be enabled to:	Initiating The child should be enabled to:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • listen to religious stories which emphasise feelings and emotions. • become aware of various feelings such as happiness, love, joy, excitement, surprise, pain and fear and to have these feelings described by an adult and acknowledged when they occur. • participate in turn-taking activities/ games. • become aware of the feelings of others, recognise how others are feeling in certain situations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • show interest in stories that illustrate different emotions and feelings. • express a range of feelings in response to particular experiences. • participate in activities that require everyone to give and share something. • identify and name the feelings that other people are experiencing in various situations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • communicate about a variety of feelings and link them with experiences where these may be experienced. • use the language of feelings in everyday situations to describe how s/he and others are feeling. • care for and co-operate with each other. • talk about the feelings of other people in various situations.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • listen to accounts of people who respond to the feelings of others. • have opportunity to participate in group games and activities. • listen to stories about families: feel the love and care that comes from a family. • listen to accounts of happenings in the lives of other students and adults. • listen to religious stories illustrating how God values everyone. • receive praise and affirmation for effort: develop a sense of achievement. • attend to a variety of 'beautiful' things, flowers, music, a lovely piece of fabric, and the sea. • become aware of rules in the school and community that may concern him/her. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • show awareness that an individual's actions can affect the feelings of another. • use laughter and smiles to express their emotions when participating in pleasurable group activities. • show awareness of the love and care that is received from his/her family. • show interest and respond to the happenings in the lives of other students. • show an awareness of the love that God holds for everyone. • accept opportunities to display personal ability and talents. • respond appropriately to beautiful things in the environment. • observe appropriate school and community rules. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • adjust his/her behaviour in consideration of the feelings of others: apologise where necessary. • initiate interpersonal interactions with other pupils and adult. • communicate about the ways in which families care and show love for each other. • communicate about the happenings in his/her family: special occasions, celebrations, loss and routines. • communicate about God's love for everyone. • seek out opportunities to display special abilities or to demonstrate new achievements. • care for plants, animals and surroundings. • independently observe community and school rules.
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