



Harding Memorial Integrated Primary School Religious Education Policy – September 2025

Mission Statement

Harding Memorial Integrated Primary School formally transformed to Controlled Integrated Status on September 2021. At Harding Memorial Integrated Primary School, our ethos is rooted in the belief that true education transcends academic achievement—it is a powerful force for social cohesion, mutual respect, and lasting peace. Our Integrated Ethos is not just a guiding principle; it is a lived experience that shapes every aspect of school life.

Welcoming the Whole Community

We proudly open our arms to the entire community, embracing pupils and families from all social, cultural, and religious backgrounds. Our school is a place where diversity is not only accepted but celebrated. This inclusive approach fosters a sense of belonging and unity, ensuring that every child feels valued and respected.

Education as a Catalyst for Change

We believe that education should lead change. By nurturing open-mindedness, empathy, and critical thinking, we empower our pupils to become active contributors to a more just and harmonious society. Our curriculum and daily practices are designed to promote understanding and reconciliation, laying the foundation for a brighter future.

Learning and Playing Together

At Harding Memorial, children learn and play together in an environment that encourages collaboration, kindness, and curiosity. From classroom activities to playground interactions, pupils are given opportunities to build friendships across traditional divides. This shared experience helps to break down barriers and build trust from an early age.

A Future Built on Reconciliation and Trust

We are committed to creating a school culture where reconciliation is not just a concept, but a daily reality. By fostering trust and mutual respect, we prepare our pupils to thrive in a diverse world and to contribute positively to their communities.

School Ethos

Harding Memorial Integrated Primary School welcomes children of all faiths and none. We believe that Religious Education provides young people with the opportunities to learn about, discuss, evaluate and learn from religious beliefs, practices and values. Through Religious Education young people are able to develop a positive sense of themselves and their beliefs, along with a respect for the beliefs and values of others.

Our teaching and learning Religious Programme is predominately based on Christianity as set out by DENI, but other world religions are covered within the RE curriculum. We strongly believe that pupils learn best in an inclusive, safe environment where differences can be discussed respectfully and similarities celebrated together. We believe that pupils should learn together. By attending our school pupils are expected to attend Religious Education lessons as part of teaching and learning in the normal school day but can opt out of Christian worship, if requested in writing by their parents/guardians. The nature of Religious Education and its content means that pupils should learn to appreciate that life can have religious, spiritual and moral dimensions. Religious Education should also strongly support the general ethos of the school in promoting in the pupils a sense of self-worth and tolerance.

Religious Education in Northern Ireland plays a vital role in shaping pupils' intellectual, emotional, and spiritual development. It is designed not only to impart knowledge but also to foster mutual respect, critical thinking, and personal growth. Harding Memorial implements the key aims, pedagogical approaches, and broader educational contributions of RE as defined by the Department of Education (DE).

- It is our aim at Harding Memorial Integrated Primary School to support children to grow in their own faith and to learn about the faith of others, including the main world religions.
- Other than the classes for Catholic children preparing to take the sacraments, after school Bible Club, or any specific events that parents must enrol their children for, all R.E. is taught as a subject. (The only exception to this might be a Christmas Carol or the Christmas story read from the Bible during part of the Key Stage 2 Christmas show and attendance at this part of the show is optional). The practice of a particular religion is a matter for parents and ultimately for the pupils themselves. When looking at aspects of a religion, the role of R.E. is not to state what is true or false, so much as to help pupils understand the beliefs and practices of others.
- The language teachers use in discussing stories and topics in R.E. has been given careful consideration. For example statements such as; “We believe that...” “This story teaches us that Jesus was the Son of God...” “This tells us how the world was created...” ...are not used.
- Instead teachers will say; “Christians/Hindus/Sikhs believe that...” “This is why Christians believe...” “This is how the bible says the world was created...” “People take communion to remind them...” Similarly, stories from a religion are taught as such; they are stories from a religion. Their ultimate truth, literal or parabolic, is not a matter for school. For example, the creation story in Genesis will be studied as a story from the bible, which is important to Judaism, Christianity and Islam. (It is likely that by P6 or P7 pupils will be able to discuss not just the story’s content, but also its possible meanings, and why it has caused so much disagreement, even among Christians.)
- This way R.E. is a subject that includes everyone, and no one is left out because they are of a religion other than Christianity, or have no religious beliefs in a safe and nurturing environment.
- We use a ‘teach not preach’ model to provide children with an insight into some of the major religious stories and themes. The content leans towards stories from the Christian culture reflecting the Northern Ireland Curriculum set by the Department of Education Northern Ireland (DENI). However, it is designed to be inclusive and does not include worship or proselytizing.

- Through our RE Curriculum pupils will also have the opportunity challenge negative attitudes, value and practices in society and inform children of world faiths. Children address prejudice and bias issues like disability, colour, race and culture in a sensitive, age related and thought-provoking way. They also learn about Christianity, the NI Chinese Community, Hinduism, Sikhism, Buddhism, Judaism and Islam.

Core Aims of Religious Education

RE is intended to be a dynamic and inclusive subject that:

- Encourages pupils to share their views and explore complex issues in an atmosphere of mutual respect.
- Promotes understanding of the diverse and enriching variety of personal faiths and non-religious worldviews.
- Cultivates a “sense of awe and mystery” through deepening faith or philosophical exploration of life’s meaning.
- Challenges pupils to reflect on their own beliefs while engaging with those of others.

Educational Balance and Methodology

RE should maintain a balanced and holistic approach to learning by integrating:

- **Factual Knowledge:** Understanding religious texts, traditions, and historical contexts.
- **Conceptual and Spiritual Understanding:** Exploring the deeper meanings and implications of faith.
- **Emotional and Attitudinal Development:** Encouraging empathy, respect, and open-mindedness.
- **Experiential and Enquiry-Based Learning:** Engaging pupils through discussion, reflection, and real-world application.

This multifaceted approach ensures that RE is both intellectually rigorous and personally meaningful.

Skills Development

RE contributes significantly to the development of key intellectual and interpersonal skills:

- **Logical and Consistent Thinking:** Encouraging structured reasoning and ethical analysis.
- **Application of Thought:** Applying critical thinking to a range of religious and moral issues.
- **Empathy and Understanding:** Fostering the ability to appreciate and respect diverse beliefs and practices.

These skills are essential not only within RE but across the broader curriculum and in life beyond school.

Relevance and Enjoyment

Above all, RE should be:

- **Enjoyable:** Engaging pupils through stimulating content and interactive learning.
- **Relevant:** Connecting religious and moral questions to pupils' lives and contemporary society.
- **Forward-Looking:** Preparing students for the diverse and interconnected world they will enter after school.

Role Within the Revised Curriculum

RE also supports wider educational goals through its contribution to:

- **Personal Development and Mutual Understanding (PDMU/Paths):** Helping pupils build self-awareness, emotional intelligence, and respectful relationships.
- **Spiritual and Ethical Awareness:** Encouraging reflection on values, purpose, and moral responsibility.

Ethos & Inclusivity

- The school follows **Department of Education** and **NICIE** guidelines.
- The school has an inclusive **ethos** and it promotes **respect and inclusion** for pupils of **all faiths and none**.
- All students are acknowledged as **valued members** of the school community.

Celebrations & Community Engagement

- The school **observes a variety of religious and cultural celebrations**.

Assemblies

- Used to **reflect the Key Principles of Integration**.
- Promote and celebrate our school community

Sacramental Preparation

- **Year 4:** Preparation for **First Holy Communion** and **Reconciliation**.
- **Year 7:** Preparation for **Confirmation**.
- **Parental involvement** is encouraged in these preparations. Parents must enrol their child in order for them to attend these lessons

After School Bible Club

- This is provided by volunteers from Willowfield Church of Ireland Congregation and runs for 6 weeks in Term 2. Parents must enrol their child for them to attend this club.

Diet

The school supports those pupils whose faith requires a special diet

✨ Social Responsibility at Harding Memorial Integrated Primary School

Harding Memorial Integrated Primary School is committed to fostering an inclusive, respectful, and supportive environment where every child is valued and empowered to reach their full potential.

🏠 Inclusive Education for All

- Delivers the curriculum on an **all-ability and inclusive basis**.
- Recognizes the **unique worth of every pupil**, supporting their personal, social, intellectual, and spiritual growth.

❤️ Promoting Confidence and Respect

- Focuses on **nurturing self-confidence and self-respect** in all pupils.
- Encourages **non-violent conflict resolution** through programs like:
 - **PDMU** (Personal Development and Mutual Understanding)
 - **PATHS** (Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies)
- (See the school's *Anti-Bullying and Positive Behaviour Policy* for more details.)

💛 Building Strong Partnerships

- Actively collaborates with other integrated schools via:
 - **APTIS** (Association of Principal Teachers in Integrated Schools)
 - **VP Forum** (Vice Principal Forum)

🏡 Community Engagement

- Maintains strong **links with local nursery, primary and post-primary schools**.
- Plays an active role in the **wider community**, promoting integration and shared learning.

Golden Rules at Our School

1. We are gentle.

We do not hurt others.

2. We are kind and helpful

We do not hurt anybody's feelings.

3. We listen.

We do not interrupt.

4. We are honest.

We do not cover up the truth.

5. We work hard.

We do not waste our own or other's time.

6. We look after property.

We do not waste or damage things.

All our aims and objectives are supported by The Golden Rules which have been adopted as our Harding Memorial Integrated Primary School Rules. This is further supported by school initiatives such as the PATHS programme, Playground Buddies, WAU topics such as Fairtrade, Integrated Education Month, Charities, Artwork, NSPCC Keeping Safe Programme

School Staff

- All staff will model respect for others and all faiths in every aspect of school life and All staff will use the inclusive language of 'we' rather than 'us' and 'them' when discussing any faith.

Roles and Responsibilities

- The Board of Governors has responsibility for the oversight of Religious Education in the school.
- Oversight of R.E. includes consideration of its status and its needs in each review of the School Development Plan.
- The school will have a member of staff responsible for the co-ordination of R.E. in the school
- Appropriate steps will be taken to inform and secure the support of parents/guardians regarding the R.E. programme.

Conclusion

Any course of study must reflect the abilities of the children it is intended for. In the very early years, activities must be simple and clear. It is not advisable to try to convey more than one idea (simple) at a time, and more that one activity may be needed to reinforce each idea. Later, children may be able to relate several ideas and develop them logically, but this must still be firmly founded in their own experience. All activities and experiences offered by our School must relate to the overall aim and objectives set out showing which objectives they develop.

Review September 2028