

NORTH BAY NATIONAL SCHOOL PROJECT

PATRONS POLICY

Religious Education shall be given as laid down in the Rules for National Schools, by way of a multi-denominational core curriculum, which shall be a broad education based on the principle of tolerance and which will harness the naturally enquiring minds of the young children.

The core curriculum will recognise the difference in beliefs and traditions among children and shall use those differences as a catalyst for questioning and inquiry. The core curriculum will allow investigation and discussion about all religious traditions, as well as non-belief, and will not concentrate simply on the Christian traditions. It will not be a simple comparative study of religion but one which will be broadened out – and might even start from – issues of a social, moral and ethical character.

The school management will facilitate denominational religious instruction on the school premises but outside school hours and organised by those parents who wish it wherever possible.

The above policy is designed to be educational rather than instructional and conforms more fully with the aims of the New Curriculum currently operating in National Schools. Because of this we believe it is possible to integrate the core curriculum into the daily life of the school, so that ideas raised can be explored in a variety of forms during the rest of day, for example through art, drama, school visits, English and Irish composition and reading.

It is the belief of the Association that denominational instruction during school hours would be educationally divisive, in that children of different religions would have to be withdrawn from class for their particular instruction. This would be contrary to our aim of fostering a unified community among the children through a positive recognition of their differences.

The core curriculum would be practical manifestation of the school's ethos. This being so, denominational instruction during the school day would eat into an already crowded curriculum to the detriment of some children's education.

Some management's, where the Patron is a religious body, are not obliged to offer denominational education to children who are not of the same religious affiliation as the Patron. The only facility allowed is the right to withdraw.

This right is important in terms of civil and constitutional rights, but is not, in our view, educationally sound. What the multi-denominational sector is offering is a recognition, respect and tolerance of all religious beliefs and none on the basis of integration rather than separation. This aims to ensure that no parent should feel it necessary to withdraw their child from any part of the school day.

We believe that an insistence that denominational instruction be facilitated during the school day would undermine our ethos in an unfair and unequal way, as no other sector is obliged to provide such instruction.

Our policy is consistent with the Rules for National Schools and with the aims of the New Curriculum.