

Prayer Spaces & RE



What does RE in Irish schools look like?

Religious Education (RE) is part of the core curriculum within schools in Ireland. However within Primary level it remains the responsibility of Religious Patrons and not the state to dictate a curriculum. Post Primary Schools have to provide RE in accordance with the core curriculum up until 6th class. This is drawn up by state and assessed in its relation to the central features of learning throughout curriculum. **What is taught in a school is decided locally and depends, to some extent, on the faith traditions of the local community.**

At a national level the post primary context of RE is focused around three key themes: **Expressing beliefs, Exploring Questions and Living our Values.** Each theme is underpinned by cross cutting elements of **Enquiry - simulating pupils curiosity, Exploration - examining a topic or question in detail and Reflection and action - cultivating reflective practice.** The RE curriculum aims to develop knowledge, understanding, skills, attitudes and values to enable young people to come to an understanding of religion and its relevance to life, relationships, society and the wider world. It aims to develop the students' ability to examine questions of meaning, purpose and relationships, to help students understand, respect and appreciate people's expression of beliefs, and to facilitate dialogue and reflection on the diversity of beliefs and values that inform responsible decision-making and ways of living.

The specification of RE from Primary through to secondary affords schools freedom to approach to the way they teach RE. Therefore, the best way to find out about RE in a school is to **meet up with the Head Teacher or RE Lead Teacher and discuss it**, exploring ways in which a prayer space could enrich what is being taught. This reflects an essential aspect of hosting a prayer space in a school – the importance of building a positive relationship with the school and its staff, and so **connecting the Christian community with the school community to develop trust and mutual understanding.**

Enriching RE with Prayer Spaces in Schools

Here are just a few examples of why PDMU is important (from the NCCA guidance for RE) and how Prayer Spaces in Schools connect with RE:



RE	Prayer Spaces in Schools
It provokes challenging questions about the meaning and purpose of life, beliefs, the self, issues of right and wrong, and what it means to be human. (Key Element: Exploring questions)	The prayer activities can provide opportunities for pupils to wonder about life, identity, their own beliefs/values and issues of justice and forgiveness. (E.g. Masks, Mountain Series, Empty Plate)
Pupils have opportunity to develop an awareness, knowledge, understanding and appreciation the role of prayer in the lives of people of faith. (Key Element: Expressing Beliefs)	Pupils learn about Christian beliefs about God, prayer and social action in the prayer space – they also have chance to reflect personally and consider their own spirituality. (E.g. Bubble Tube, Refugee Rucksacks)
It prompts pupils to consider their responsibilities to themselves and to others , and to explore how they might contribute to their communities and to wider society. (Key Element: Exploring questions)	A range of prayer activities enable pupils to reflect on their sense of self, their close relationships, living in community and social responsibility. (e.g. Little People, Fizzy Forgiveness, Knife Angel)
It encourages pupils synthesise and consider the insights gained about how people express and live out their beliefs , religious or otherwise and to explore their own beliefs (whether they are religious or nonreligious). (Key Element: Expressing Beliefs)	Prayer spaces are welcoming and hospitable to pupils of all faiths and none, helping them to reflect on their own beliefs about prayer, faith and spirituality. A prayer space offers pupils the chance to express their responses in a range of ways. (e.g. Hopes and Dreams, Big Questions)
Encourages students to explore how the religious teachings of a major world religion address an issue of concern for the world today. Explain how an understanding of care for the earth promotes the wellbeing of all people and the planet and discuss its relevance for today (Key Element: Exploring Questions and Living our Values)	Prayer activities which focus on world issues allow students to explore issues of justice, the environment their responsibility to helping other and the planet. (E.g. Name That Feeling, Bought and Sold, Pray the News)