SAINT JOSEPH'S HIGH SCHOOL, CROSSMAGLEN

Policy on Withdrawal from Religious Education and Collective Worship

SPRING 2026

1. Mission Statement

"Every Child, Every Chance, Every Class, Every Day"

St Joseph's High School is a Catholic maintained school committed to the mission of Catholic education which seeks to promote the spiritual, moral, intellectual and personal development of every pupil in the light of the Gospel.

Our Catholic school's vision and ethos:

- INVITES a personal relationship with Christ, Nourishes spirit journeys. Respecting people of all faiths and world views.
- SHINES as part of a wider community, Partners with families, parishes and society for the common good.
- NURTURES a love of learning, integrates faith and reason to encourage excellence, creativity and discovery.
- DIGNIFIES the person. Focuses on holistic development, affirming the unique worth of every person.
- BUILDS a culture of welcome, collaboration, and inclusion for all. Fosters a sense of belonging and connectedness through Gospel values.
- WEAVES social and environmental justice. Inspires all to become agents of change and care for the marginalised.
- NAVIGATES new spaces with discernment and creativity. Provides a moral compass to meet the opportunities and challenges of today.

Religious Education and opportunities for prayer and worship are central to the life of the school and form an integral part of the Catholic ethos which underpins all aspects of school life.

The school recognises, however, the statutory rights of parents in relation to withdrawal from Religious Education and collective worship as outlined in **Department of Education Northern Ireland Circular 2026/09**.

2. Legislative Context

The arrangements in this policy reflect the provisions set out in:

- **Article 21 of the Education and Libraries (Northern Ireland) Order 1986**
- Guidance issued by the **Department of Education Northern Ireland**
- The Catholic ethos and trusteeship responsibilities of Catholic maintained schools.

Under this legislation, parents have the right to request that their child be wholly or partly excused from:

- Religious Education
- Collective Worship
- Both Religious Education and Collective Worship.

The school will respect and implement such requests in accordance with Departmental guidance.

3. The Place of Religious Education in a Catholic School

In a Catholic maintained school, Religious Education:

- is a **core subject** in the curriculum
- contributes to the **faith formation and spiritual development** of pupils
- supports pupils in exploring questions of meaning, purpose and belief
- encourages respect and understanding of other faiths and worldviews.

Religious Education is delivered in accordance with the guidance of the **Catholic Schools' Trustee Service** and the expectations of the Catholic Church for Catholic schools.

4. Collective Worship

Collective worship is a normal part of school life and may include:

- daily or weekly prayer
- assemblies with a prayerful dimension
- liturgical celebrations
- school Masses
- opportunities for reflection during the liturgical year.

These opportunities support the school's Catholic ethos and foster a sense of community.

5. Parental Right to Withdrawal

Parents have the right to request that their child be withdrawn from:

- all Religious Education
- specific elements/topics of Religious Education
- collective worship/specific activities of collective worship
- both Religious Education and collective worship.

Parents are **not required to provide a reason** for their request.

Requests should be made in writing to the **principal, by completing the form at the end of this policy**.

6. Arrangements Following Withdrawal

Where a pupil is withdrawn, the school will make appropriate arrangements for the pupil during the relevant periods.

These arrangements will:

- ensure the pupil is **appropriately supervised**
- provide **meaningful alternative activities**
- avoid **stigmatisation or exclusion**
- ensure the pupil is not disadvantaged educationally.

Alternative provision may include:

- supervised quiet study
- supervised independent reading
- supervised independent completion of other schoolwork.

Alternative provision **will not** include:

- Additional teaching
- 1:1 Support

7. School Assemblies

The school recognises that assemblies may contain elements of collective worship.

In line with Departmental guidance, important school communications will not rely solely on assemblies to ensure that pupils who are withdrawn from collective worship are not disadvantaged.

Where necessary, key information will be communicated through alternative channels.

The curriculum plan for Year 8 – 14 Religion and a catholic worship calendar of events is included at the end of this policy.

8. Record Keeping

The school will maintain a confidential record of all parental requests for withdrawal.

Records will include:

- the name of the pupil
- the date of the request
- the scope of withdrawal
- Alternative arrangements

Records will be stored in accordance with **data protection legislation**.

9. Communication of the Policy

This policy will be:

- published on the **school website**
- available to parents on request
- referenced in the **school prospectus**.

All queries in relation to the policy should be made to the Principal at info@stjosephs.crossmaglen.ni.sch.uk

10. Monitoring and Review

The implementation of this policy will be monitored by the **Principal and Senior Leadership Team**.

The policy will be reviewed periodically by the **Board of Governors** in consultation with the school's trustees and all stakeholders and in line with guidance from the **Department of Education Northern Ireland** and **Council for Catholic Maintained Schools**.

11. Approval

Approved by: **Board of Governors**

Date: _____

Review Date: _____

Standard Withdrawal Proforma Annex A

Section 1: Pupil Details

Name of pupil: _____

Year group/class: _____

Section 2: Parent/Carer Details

Name of parent/carer submitting this request: _____

Relationship to pupil: _____

Preferred contact email: _____

Preferred contact phone number: _____

Section 3: Request for Withdrawal

(Please tick all that apply)

I request that my child be withdrawn from:

Religious Education

- ☐ All RE
- ☐ Specific RE topics/units (please specify):

_____
_____
_____

Collective Worship

- ☐ All collective worship
- ☐ Specific elements of collective worship (please specify e.g. prayers, hymns, liturgical acts, assembly, particular speakers):

_____
_____
_____

Section 4: Start Date I request that withdrawal arrangements begin:

☐ Immediately

or

From (date): ____ / ____ / _____

Section 5: Confirmation

By signing below, I confirm that I am exercising my statutory right to withdraw my child from Religious Education and/or collective worship (delete as appropriate) understand that:

- I do not need to give reasons for this request;
- The school must implement this request promptly and without negotiation;
- This request will remain in place until I submit a written request to end or amend it.

Signature of parent/carer: _____

Date: ____ / ____ / _____

Section 6: School Use Only (to be completed by the school)

Date received: ____ / ____ / _____

Acknowledgement issued: ☐ Yes – date: ____ / ____ / _____

Arrangements begin: ____ / ____ / _____

Alternative arrangements provided:

Recorded in confidential register:

☐ Yes – date: ____ / ____ / _____

Name of staff member processing request: _____

YR. 8 RE CURRICULUM PLAN – FULLY ALIVE 1

Term 1	Term 2	Term 3

New beginnings/ You are special. The Bible. Advent/ Christmas.	Jesus' Early Years/Life in Palestine. John The Baptist/Baptism. Lent. Jesus Begins His Work / The Twelve. Parables. The Suffering and death of Jesus.	The Resurrection/Pentecost. Life In the Early Church. The Mass Today. Leaders in the Catholic Church.

YR. 9 RE CURRICULUM PLAN – FULLY ALIVE 2

Term 1	**Term 2**	**Term 3**
God's Creation Living According to God's Will -The Ten Commandments Advent & Liturgical Year	Conflict & the Followers of Jesus Christianity Today (Study RC and the Anglican Church) Holy Week & Easter	The Church – Past & Present Judaism

YR. 10 RE CURRICULUM PLAN – FULLY ALIVE and Booklets

Term 1	**Term 2**	**Term 3**

ME: My Values & Attitudes – including Teen Boundaries/Personal Boundaries November Dead List Death & Eternal Life. Friendship & Friendship with God The Trinity – relationship with God Advent & Christmas Poverty at Christmas	Jesus and his Relationships with Others Prejudice and Stereotyping, Human Rights Islam Holy Week	The Empty Tomb Christianity comes to Ireland

GCSE YR. 11 RE. CURRICULUM PLAN

Term 1	Term 2	Term 3
1. The Identity of Jesus. 2. Jesus the Miracle Worker.	3. The Teachings of Jesus. 4. Suffering & Death of Jesus.	5. Discipleship. Revision PPQ'S.

GCSE YR. 12 RE. CURRICULUM PLAN

Term 1	Term 2	Term 3
1. Personal & Family Issues. 2. Matters of Life & Death.	3. Development of Bio Ethics. 4. Contemporary Issues.	5. Modern Warfare. Revision PPQ'S.

OCN RE – YR. 11 CURRICULUM PLAN

Term 1	Term 2	Term 3
Unit 1 – Personal Identity. Unit 2 -Charity.	Unit 3 – Religious Traditions. Unit 4 – World Faiths	Unit 5 – Life of a Famous Person of Faith.

OCN RE – YR. 12 CURRICULUM PLAN

Term 1	Term 2	Term 3
Unit 6 – Prejudice. Unit 7 - Addiction.	Unit 8 – Marriage & Divorce. Unit 9 – Life & Death.	Catching up on work missed throughout the year.

AS/A2 RE CURRICULUM PLAN

AS RE - AN INTRODUCTION TO ISLAM

Term 1	Term 2	Term 3
• The Life of Muhammad. • The Quran (Part 1) • Christmas exams.	• The Quran (Part 2) • The 5 Pillars.	• Worship & The Mosque.

AS . RE – FOUNDATIONS OF ETHICS WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO ISSUES IN MEDICAL ETHICS.

Term 1	Term 2	Term 3
• Deontological Approaches to Moral Decision Making. • Teleological Approaches to Moral Decision Making (Utilitarianism)	• Teleological Approaches to Moral Decision Making (Situation Ethics). • Life & Death Issues.	• Development in Bio-ethics.

A2 6 -Islam in the Contemporary Context.

Term 1	Term 2	Term 3
• Articles of Faith. • Origins & Beliefs of Sunni/Shia Islam.	• Contemporary Issues.	• Synoptic Assessment.

A2 7 -Global Ethics.

Term 1	Term 2	Term 3
• Moral Theory. • Global Rights.	• Global Rights (cont'd) • Global Issues.	• Synoptic Assessment.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS - Catholic Worship*

School prayers said each morning at registration

Term 1

DATE	LITURGICAL EVENT	TIME	VENUE
August	Staff Mass	TBC	Assembly Hall
September	Junior Assembly	8:30am	Assembly Hall
September	Senior Assembly	8:30am	Assembly Hall
September - June	Wednesday Morning Mass begins.	8:10am	Oratory
September	Yr. 8 Gideon Bible Assembly	TBC	Assembly Hall
September – May.	Confessions - Mon/Wed. P. 9 & 10. Beginning with Yr. 14.	1:30-3:35pm Mon. & Wed	Oratory
September	Yr. 13 Trip to Knock	7:30am	Leave from school.
December	Advent Assembly (Juniors)	8:30am	Assembly Hall
December	Advent Assembly (Seniors)	8:30am	Assembly Hall

Term 2

DATE	LITURGICAL EVENT	TIME	VENUE
January – March.	Confessions continue with Yrs. 11, 10 & 9.	1:30-3:35pm Mon. & Wed.	Oratory
January	Catholic Schools Week		
February	Assembly Ash Wednesday. (Junior)	8:30 am	Assembly Hall
February	Assembly Ash Wednesday (Senior)	8:45am	Assembly Hall
September - June	Wednesday Morning Mass	8:10am	Oratory
March/April.	Stations of the Cross (Juniors)	1:15pm	St Patrick's Church.

Term 3

DATE	LITURGICAL EVENT	TIME	VENUE
April/May	Confessions finish with Yr. 8	1:30-3:35pm Mon./ Wed.	Oratory
September - June	Wednesday Morning Mass	8:10am	Oratory

April	Yr. 10 Mass with Bishop Reuter	1:30pm	Assembly Hall
April	Yr. 12 End of Year Mass	1:30pm	Sports Hall
April	Yr. 14 End of Year Mass.	1:30pm	Sports Hall
May	Yr. 8 Mass	TBC	St Patrick's Church/ Assembly Hall

*There may be changes as required throughout the school year.