Mary Immaculate, a community embracing learning in and beyond the classroom, in the spirit of Christ and the humanness of all.

Religious Education Policy

Rationale:
The community of Mary Immaculate School believes that Religious Education is the basis of all we do and as such, is an essential part of the formation of the whole person. It has Jesus at its centre. Religious Education connects the ordinary to the spiritual by teaching our students to interpret our world within the context of the Gospel Values. It develops individual relationships with God by teaching our students about God through Scripture, liturgy, prayer, tradition and life.

Aims:
• To develop acceptance and respect for everyone within the Mary Immaculate School community
• To create a climate within the school which reflects Gospel Values in the spirit of Christ, where acceptance, support and empathy are visible
• To support all students in their faith journey
• To provide experiences of and participation in prayer and liturgy
• To develop the students’ knowledge and understanding of the rituals and traditions of the Catholic Church
• To develop the students’ knowledge of Scripture including the Old and New Testaments
• To nurture students’ relationships with God through each student taking part in the sacramental programs of Eucharist, Reconciliation and Confirmation
• To give students the opportunity to be exposed to the teachings of Jesus Christ and be encouraged to reflect upon these and apply them in their daily life.
• To nurture families in their understanding of their faith so that they can support their children in their faith journey.

Curriculum:
The Religious Education program incorporates the Religious Education Frameworks (developed by Catholic Education Melbourne) which are supported by the “To Know, Worship and Love” texts (produced by the Archdiocese of Melbourne). The program is taught through an inclusive and contemporary curriculum, which is planned, sequential and relevant to the Mary Immaculate School Community. It aims to help children grow in their relationship with God and supports the family as the primary educators in faith. The program builds on the experiences of each child and integrates the dimensions of Religious Knowledge and Understanding, Reasoning and Responding and Personal and Communal Engagement.
Prayer:
Prayer is a Faith experience. It is an important part of our Faith expression. It is an expression of the connection between our lives and our relationship with God.

Prayer is an essential component of the Religious Education curriculum at Mary Immaculate School. Throughout their schooling, the students will be exposed to different types of prayer, both formal and informal, some of which the students are expected to learn to recite. Prayer occurs each morning and afternoon as well as when opportunities for spontaneous prayer arise. Formal prayers are taught at each year level while informal prayers are encouraged at all levels. Meditation sessions occur in every classroom on Monday, Wednesday and Friday.

Liturgy:
Liturgy is an expression of our Faith. God is revealed to us through the story of Jesus’ life and participation in the liturgy. The liturgy provides a focus for the Mary Immaculate School Community to gather in God’s presence in both word and sacrament. Through liturgy we can assist students in developing an awareness of the sacred within themselves. Liturgy ritualises the relationship of life and faith through our Catholic heritage and traditions. The liturgical celebration involves signs and symbols that connect our humanness to the sacred.

The opportunity to come together to pray and celebrate various feasts and occasions is an important part of the spiritual life of everyone at Mary Immaculate School. When we gather together for Masses and Prayer Liturgies, we celebrate our unity as a family as well as valued members of the Church.

As a community we join together to pray during school assemblies, classroom and school celebrations, staff meetings, parish events and other special occasions.

Each classroom has a prayer table which helps to provide a focus for students when praying. Teachers aim to develop a sense of the sacred within our students and also make them aware of ‘sacred spaces’.

The school gathers during the year to celebrate special Church feast days as well as important times in the Church liturgical calendar including prayer liturgies which are celebrated each week during the seasons of Lent and Advent. Each Wednesday two year levels have the responsibility to prepare, plan and attend the weekly Parish Mass where parents and families are warmly invited to attend these celebrations. The whole school comes together to celebrate Mass at least once a term.

Sacraments:
Sacraments are an essential part of the Religious Education curriculum. They celebrate God’s presence and activity in the lives of the school community. Because of the continuing revelation of God in our lives, the developing meaning of Sacraments is a life
long process. Stopping to celebrate Sacraments in a sacred place helps students connect to the nourishing, healing, welcoming, loving and embracing presence of God in their lives. It helps families and the Parish community to celebrate, remember and renew the sacramental times in their lives.

Mary Immaculate School celebrates the Sacraments of Reconciliation and Eucharist in Year 3 and the Sacrament of Confirmation in Year 6. Each Sacrament is planned and organised by the classroom teachers, the Religious Education Leader, the Principal, Parish Liturgy Team and the Parish Priest. An important aspect of the school’s Religious Education Program is the support from the school and Parish communities for the children receiving the Sacraments.

Parent and child workshop nights for students within the Catholic Parish of Ivanhoe who are preparing for each of the Sacraments are presented by an external facilitator. These workshops act as a forum for discussion between parents and children, and an opportunity for faith development about each of the Sacraments and their relevance in today’s society.

Assessment:
At Mary Immaculate School we assess religious knowledge. We do not assess faith, as we believe it is a gift from God and that each student has their own personal commitment to God and to others. We do however, nurture faith to enable it to grow.

We assess students’ religious knowledge, skills, participation in liturgical events and completion of classroom activities. A variety of techniques are used to assess in Religious Education. Some of the assessment tools include: rubrics, checklists, anecdotal records, concept maps, questioning, pre test/post test and samples of students’ work.

Evaluation:
The Religious Education Program is evaluated:
1 through the monitoring of students’ progress and responses and modifying program as necessary at the completion of each unit
2 by regular reviews of units and appropriate resources available.

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