



Belong To LGBTQ+
Youth Ireland

JUNIOR CYCLE RELIGIOUS EDUCATION



Rationale

Religious Education promotes the holistic development of the person. It facilitates the intellectual, social, emotional, spiritual and moral development of students. Religious Education provides a particular space for students to encounter and engage with the deepest and most fundamental questions relating to life, meaning and relationships. It encourages students to reflect, question, critique, interpret, imagine and find insight for their lives. The students' own experience and their continuing search for meaning is encouraged and supported.

Religious Education supports the development of students by helping them to explore how religious and other beliefs are expressed; engage with life's big questions; and reflect on moral values for life.

As students learn to live in an increasingly pluralistic world, Religious Education has a critical role to play in the curriculum in providing opportunities for them to consider the variety of religious beliefs found in Ireland and elsewhere, become aware of different understandings of the Divine, and examine other interpretations of life. It encourages respect and understanding of different beliefs, perspectives and ways of living, including both the religious and non-religious responses to human experience.

Religion has shaped and been shaped by historical events, something which continues today. Religious Education gives students an important framework for understanding past and present events, actions and beliefs and their impact within the context of people's lives. It also promotes an understanding of religions as dynamic, internally diverse and evolving over time. Religious Education within an Irish context offers students an opportunity to develop an understanding of how different

religions, and Christianity in particular, have contributed to the society in which we live.

People today are faced with concerns, many of which require an ethical response. Religious Education has an important contribution to make in encouraging students to engage critically with belief systems and principles of moral behaviour which can serve as a foundation for decisions.

Religious Education helps to equip students with the knowledge, understanding, skills, attitudes and values to support their life journey and enable them to participate in their communities and in the world as informed, respectful, responsible and caring members of society.

Aim

Religious Education 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.

Structure

Learning outcomes in the junior cycle Religious Education specification are organized into three strands that share the same three cross-strand elements.



Figure 1: The three strands in junior cycle Religious Education

There is potential for teachers to include LGBTQ+ content and perspectives into their teaching and assessment of learning outcomes in junior cycle Religious Education. Sample learning outcomes with scope for inclusion of LGBTQ+ content and perspectives include:

Strand 1: Expressing beliefs

ELEMENTS: Enquiry / Exploration / Reflection and Action

1.7 Discuss the significance of non-religious rituals/celebrations for people's lives

1.11 Research religious or other organisations, working at a national or international level to promote justice, peace and reconciliation and consider how their work is an expression of their founding vision

1.12 Synthesise and consider the insights gained about how people express and live out their beliefs, religious or otherwise

Strand 2: Exploring questions

ELEMENTS: Enquiry / Exploration / Reflection and Action

2.2 Consider responses from one major world religion and from a non-religious worldview to some big questions about the meaning of life, such as, Why are we here? How should we live? What happens when we die?

2.7 Explore how the religious teachings of a major world religion address an issue of concern for the world today

2.10 Synthesise and consider the insights gained about how people with different religious beliefs and other interpretations of life respond to questions of meaning, purpose and relationships

Strand 3: Living our values

ELEMENTS: Enquiry / Exploration / Reflection and Action

- 3.1 Examine different sources of values and ways in which the values of a person relate to their everyday life choices, their relationships, and their responsibilities to others

Ideas for Teaching and Learning:

Facilitate your students to:

- Investigate deities representing intersex identities across the gender spectrum such as Shiva/Parvati in Hinduism.
- Produce a fact file about the religious teachings of one of the five major world religions about sexual orientation.
- Identify extracts in sacred texts to support the idea that all people should be treated equally, with love, respect, understanding and compassion.

- Explore progress or changes in the way that the major world religions reference or include people who identify as LGBTQ+, for example, by analysing relevant quotes by religious leaders.
- Interrogate common misconceptions about LGBTQ+ people vis-à-vis religion, for example, that LGBTQ+ people cannot be part of a faith community, or that LGBTQ+ people don't have families or children.
- Report on an LGBTQ+ person who, because of their religious beliefs or worldview, has had a positive impact on the world.
- Discuss the significance of Pride as a non-religious festival.
- Explore groups and organisations working in Ireland and internationally to promote LGBTQ+ inclusion within specific faith communities



Belong To LGBTQ+
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Belong To is a national organisation supporting LGBTQ+ youth.

Since 2003, we have worked with LGBTQ+ young people across Ireland offering safety and support through our services. Let your students and youth groups know about Belong To and what supports are available for them including LGBTQ+ youth groups, crisis counselling with Pieta and digital support services.

For educators, we offer online training, support and initiatives such as the LGBTQ+ Quality Mark. For youth workers, we support a National Network of LGBTQ+ youth groups and run the Rainbow Award – an action-focused accreditation programme that supports a whole-organisation approach to safe and supportive services for LGBTQ+ youth.

Learn more at www.belongto.org



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