

An Overview of Education about Religions and Beliefs (ERB) and Ethics content in Patrons' Programmes

Contents

Explanation of Terms	7
Introduction	11
Introduction to Patrons' Programmes	15
Schools of a denominational ethos	16
Schools of a multi-denominational ethos	20
An Overview of ERB Content in Patrons' Programmes	24
ERB: Denominational programmes	24
ERB and Aims	24
ERB and Programme Content	25
Summary of Findings	31
ERB: Multi-denominational programmes	32
ERB and Aims	32
ERB and Programme Content	34
Summary of Findings	36
An Overview of Ethics Content	38
Ethics: Denominational programmes	38
Ethics and Aims	38
Ethics and Programme Content	39
Summary of Findings	42
Ethics: Multi-denominational programmes	42
Ethics and Aims	43
Ethics and Programme Content	43
Summary of findings	48
Conclusion and Next Steps	50
References	54
Appendices	56

List of figures and tables

Figure 1	Overview of strands in the new Catholic Religious Education Curriculum	10
Figure 2	Overview of the strands in the Follow Me programme	11
Figure 3	Organisational structure of the Islamic Religious Education programme for primary level	12
Figure 4	Overview of the structure of the Dublin Talmud Torah Jewish Studies Programme	13
Figure 5	Overview of strands in the Learn Together curriculum	14
Figure 6	Overview of ERB content in Follow Me series	20
Figure 7	ERB content in the new Catholic Preschool and Primary Religious Education Curriculum	23
Figure 8	Teaching about other religions and the levels at which they are introduced in denominational patron programmes	25
Figure 9	Overview of strand and strand units relating to ERB in the Learn Together curriculum	29
Figure 10	Overview of lesson themes relating to ERB in the Goodness Me, Goodness You! programme	30
Figure 11	Teaching about religions and beliefs and the levels at which they are introduced in multi-denominational patron programmes	31
Figure 12	Strands and strand units in which ethics education is present in the Follow Me programme	33
Figure 13	Overview of strands and strand units relating to ethics in the Learn Together curriculum	36
Figure 14	Examples of ethical themes explored in the John Scottus School Trust philosophical programme	39
Figure 15	Examples of themes in Goodness Me, Goodness You! relating to ethics education	40
Figure 16	Overview of background material for develop of a consultation document for ERB and Ethics in the primary curriculum	48
Table 1	Denominational and multi-denominational patrons	10
Table 2	Breakdown of world religions lesson in the Follow Me 5th and 6th Class book	22
Table 3	Outcomes within the Christian Faith strand relating to learning about other religions and beliefs	22
Table 4	Overview of the development of interreligious literacy skills in the new Catholic Religious Education curriculum	23
Table 5	Time specified in the new Catholic Preschool and Primary Religious Education Curriculum for Ireland	25
Table 6	Examples of ethics education in the Follow Me programme	34
Table 7	Examples of Tahdheeb lessons in the Islamic Religious Education programme	35
Table 8	Examples of aims relating to ethics education in the 'Christian Morality' strand in the new Catholic Religious Education curriculum	36
Table 9	Examples of progression of curriculum content from Junior Infants to 6th Class in the Learn Together curriculum	38
Table 10	Examples of learning outcomes relating to ethics education in the Goodness Me, Goodness You! programme	40

Explanation of Terms

This note on terminology has been created to clarify the meaning of important terms used in this paper relating to Religious Education, Ethics and Patronage of primary schools. In line with the report of the *Forum on Patronage and Pluralism in the Primary Sector* (Coolahan et al, 2012) (hereafter referred to as 'the Forum's Report') the explanations aim to provide clarity and to reflect current literature in the field, while remaining mindful of the sensitivities involved.

The Forum on Patronage and Pluralism in the Primary Sector: This forum was launched in April 2011 by government to recognise and begin to respond to the need for appropriate forms of primary school patronage for Ireland's increasingly diverse society. Professor John Coolahan (Chair), Dr. Caroline Hussey and Ms. Fionnuala Kilfeather were appointed as members of the independent Advisory Group. The Advisory Group received and listened to submissions from parents, patrons, teachers and the wider community. The Forum's Report, including recommendations, was published a year after its launch in April 2012.

Terms Relating to Religious Education and Ethics

Religious Education (RE): For the purposes of this paper RE is understood as one of seven curriculum areas and 12 subjects in the Primary School Curriculum (DES, 1999, Introduction, p.40). In this paper RE refers to a curriculum space which includes denominational and multi-denominational teaching of religion. The subject, RE, is found in different forms and under different titles around the world. Terms such as *Religious Studies* (Northern Ireland, Finland and the Netherlands), *Religion* (Sweden), *Christian Studies* (Denmark), *Religious and Moral Education* (Germany and Scotland), *Religion, Philosophies of Life and Ethics* (Norway) and *Ethics, Culture and Religion* (Quebec, Canada) are all used to describe Religious Education.

Denominational Religious Education: This means education as formation in a belief system. Faith formation involves learning how to live a life according to religious guidelines and learning modes of thinking, values formation, moral action and integration into a faith community in the light of one religious belief. It incorporates the constitutional and legal term 'religious instruction' whose connotation is now regarded as pedagogically limiting, but whose usage was widespread in the past.

Education about Religions and Beliefs (ERB): ERB helps pupils to know about and to understand the cultural heritage of the major forms of religion, belief traditions and world views which have

been embraced by humankind. It is not focussed on nurturing a belief or practice system of any one religion, instead it focuses on fostering an informed awareness of the main theist, non-theist, and secular beliefs including key aspects of their cultural manifestations. ERB aims to foster a respect, understanding and empathy for members of such religions, beliefs and world views.

Ethics Education: The teaching of ethics includes the formation in and the promotion of a personal commitment to the dignity and freedom of all human beings, the importance of human rights, the place of justice within society, and the service of the common good. These are all essential to education for citizenship and the proper functioning of democracy. Learning about ethics is important for all, but developing modes of ethical behaviour is of central importance to human development.

Pluralism: The celebration of difference in society, allowing all ethnic and other minority groups to proclaim their identities without coming into conflict with the majority population.

Terms Relating to Patronage

Ethos: Ethos may be considered in prescriptive terms, namely the formal expression of the authority's aims, objectives, goals, values and beliefs, which the school aspires to, endorses and preserves. Ethos also places an emphasis on the unavoidable exposure and immersion by all within an organisation to a prescribed set of values and beliefs. In this context, school ethos has been defined as *'the atmosphere that emerges from the interaction of a number of aspects of school life, including teaching and learning, management and leadership, the use of images and symbols, rituals and practices, as well as goals and expectations'* (Norman, 2003).

Patron: The definition of a patron in Ireland and the legal basis of its role and duties, are set out in a variety of documents and legal Acts which include: *The Constitution of Ireland (1937)*, *Education Act (1998)*, *Education (Welfare) Act (2000)*, *The Rules for National Schools (1965)* and the *Constitution of Boards and Rules of Procedure (2007)*. The key responsibilities of the patron involves promotion of school ethos, appointment and support of the board of management, financial and legal matters, the upkeep of assets and the supervision of staff appointments in accordance with department regulations.

Patron Programme: This refers to the programme or curriculum developed by a patron to underpin and promote the ethos of their schools. The Education Act (1998) recognises the legal

right for patrons to design, supervise, implement and teach their programmes. For the majority of patrons their programme addresses the area of religious education.

Denominational patronage: A denominational school is under the patronage of a single denominational group. Denominational schools provide Religious Education according to the traditions, practices and beliefs of the specified religious community. It may also provide a wider education about religions or facilitate parents of other faith traditions to enable them to provide for Religious Education in their belief system within the school or at home.

Inter-denominational patronage: A school under the patronage or trusteeship of more than one religious faith community, generally under a joint Catholic/Protestant religious ethos is described as inter-denominational (INTO, 2003). Members of both denominations are involved in the establishment of the schools, and RE programmes of both denominations are taught. Some schools under the patronage of An Foras Patrúnachta offer an inter-denominational ethos.

Multi-denominational patronage: Multi-denominational schools uphold, respect and accept equality of beliefs, whether religious or non-religious, and celebrate diverse lifestyles held by children, parents, staff and members of the wider community. In the Irish context, two types of primary schools are categorised as multi-denominational:

- Firstly, those schools that do not provide Religious Education as formation, during the school day, but do provide education about religions and beliefs. If they so desire, parents may arrange for denominational Religious Education outside school hours in such schools. Educate Together is an example of this form of multi-denominational education.
- Secondly, those schools that provide education about religions and beliefs while also providing faith nurturing for different denominations, depending on parental requests, during the school day. Community National Schools are an example of this form of multi-denominational education.

Catholic National Schools: Catholic schools in Ireland are a living expression of a long and varied tradition of education inspired by the life of Christ. Such schools emphasise the dignity of the human person as a child of God called to work with other persons in creating an inclusive community in service of the common good; where knowledge is sought and respected while faith is nurtured and challenged.

Church of Ireland National Schools: The aim of all Church of Ireland National Schools is to express the beliefs and scriptural values of the Church of Ireland, among which are honesty, justice, fairness, respect, sensitivity to others and civic responsibility. Specific faith formation is taught in local parish Sunday schools rather than in school. Events where parents play an active role, such as Christmas carol services and plays; harvest thanksgiving and Eastertide are important in nurturing ethos in Church of Ireland primary schools.

An Foras Pátrúnachta: An Foras Pátrúnachta aim to develop, strengthen and promote education through the medium of Irish throughout the country. An Foras Pátrúnachta provides a holistic education, developing and nurturing pupils through the medium of Irish. An Foras Pátrúnachta has schools of both denominational and inter-denominational ethos. The patron gives recommendations to Boards of management of schools in relation to the provision of the Irish language and faith education.

Educate Together: The educational ethos of Educate Together advocates that children learn together to live together and that every child's individuality is valued and respected. Their educational ethos requires all children to be nurtured equally, whatever their social, cultural or religious background.

Community National Schools: Community National Schools (CNS) model of primary education reflects and celebrates the diversity of Ireland in the 21st Century. They are under the patronage of the local Educational Training Board (ETB). CNS's recognise the wishes of parents to have their children receive RE during the school day. In liaison with the local faith community, children are nurtured in living to the full in accordance with faith tradition practices and celebrations including the celebration of First Communion and Confirmation in the case of Roman Catholics.

Model Schools: The Minister for Education and Skills fulfils the role of patron of the nine Model Schools. Three of the nine model schools teach through the medium of Irish. All of the model schools are co-educational. Although originally established as non-denominational schools, in practice these schools have evolved to provide primary education within a denominational ethos.

Introduction

The development of a curriculum for Education about Religions and Beliefs (ERB) and Ethics for all children was a key recommendation of the Forum on Patronage and Pluralism in the Primary Sector (Coolahan et al, 2012). This was a recognition that an important aspect of a child's education involves learning about and understanding the lives, values and traditions of friends, classmates and members of the wider community. In Irish schools a child's sense of their identity and belonging is nurtured through experiential learning, the creation of inclusive school environments and positive relationships between the child and their teacher. Such learning may already take place in subjects such as Social, Political and Health Education, the patron's programme and indeed across elements of the entire primary curriculum.

This paper was developed by the National Council of Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) to specifically examine how patrons' programmes already contribute to learning about different religions and belief-systems as well as the broad area of ethics. Along with some other research material, it will contribute to the development of a consultation paper which will inform our consultation process. In turn this consultation process will play a key role in the development of Education about Religions and Beliefs (ERB) and Ethics.

In light of the clear distinction between the two areas of ERB and Ethics, this report treats them as separate areas of provision within patrons' programmes. ERB helps children to know about and to understand the cultural heritage of the major forms of religion, belief traditions and world views which have been embraced by humankind, fostering a respect for and recognition of religions and beliefs in society, integral for living in a diverse democracy (ODIHR, 2007). Education for ethics involves the promotion of a personal commitment to the dignity and freedom of all human beings, the importance of human rights, the place of justice within society, and the service of the common good. It involves fostering ethical behaviour within young people. Within Western thinking, the study of ethics is not just about the provision of information, it is deeply concerned with character formation and human development (Coolahan et al, 2012).

This study provides an overview of ERB and Ethics content in the patrons' programmes. School patrons have been a feature of the Irish educational landscape since the establishment of the national school system. Of particular significance was the introduction of the responsibility of the

management of schools in accordance with the ethos of the patron. Patronage was and still is linked to the place of religious education in primary schools. Each patron is designated an amount of time (2.5 hours per week) to teach their programme, which has been developed by patrons to promote and underpin the ethos of their schools.

The desktop study was dependent upon available material provided by patrons to the NCCA and relevant material sourced online. For their contribution to the development of this paper the NCCA would like to thank the patrons. The overview involved analysing all available material from each of the patrons' programmes. These included teacher books, pupil workbooks, DVDs, PowerPoint presentations and support materials for teachers, pupils and parents; a full list of the materials included in this overview is found in appendix 1.

In an effort to provide an overview that reflects in a fair and balanced way the provision of ERB and Ethics content in patrons' programmes, a contact person from each patron was invited to work in partnership with the relevant Education Officer in NCCA. The contact persons provided curriculum documents, support materials and engaged in discussions around the provision of ERB and Ethics content in their programmes. They also liaised with NCCA ensuring the information in the overviews were an accurate reflection of their programme. NCCA wishes to thank the patrons' contact persons who supported the study.

It is important to acknowledge the limitations of the overview process. Firstly as the aim of this study was to provide an overview of ERB and Ethics content in patrons' programmes in order to inform the development of a curriculum for ERB and Ethics, the overview should not be viewed as representative of all the teaching and learning that takes places in a patron's programme. The overview did not include evidence from schools or classrooms and so the learning experience of children in the patron's programme is not documented. Equally, the overview does not attempt to describe the impact of the '*hidden curriculum*' on the teaching of each programme. The '*hidden curriculum*' relates to the important messages that are conveyed to all those who enter the school by its physical and social environment (NCCA, 2004, p. 32). Instead the purpose of the overview is to establish what is currently provided for in patrons' programmes and how this impacts on the development of a curriculum for ERB and Ethics.

Attention must also be drawn to the fact that in reviewing the programmes, we are not comparing like with like. Of the material supplied for analysis, Educate Together and Catholic

schools¹ have nationwide curricula; while Church of Ireland, Presbyterian, Methodist, Community National Schools, Muslim, Jewish and the John Scottus schools have developed specific programmes to be taught in their schools. In order to document and organise the data gathered an ‘*overview tool*’ was developed (Appendix 2). This technical instrument acted as a reference for NCCA throughout the research. Due to the variety of formats used it proved challenging to align the provision of ERB and Ethics content across patrons’ programmes and so this overview, while providing an overview of ERB and Ethics content in each of the programmes, it does not intend to compare, contrast or rank this provision in relation to the different programmes. The overview aims to provide a fair, balanced and broad summary of the provision of ERB and Ethics content across patrons’ programmes.

The paper has two major sections: an overview of ERB content in patrons’ programmes and an overview of ethics content in patrons’ programmes. The overview provides the strands, units and lessons which relate to ERB and Ethics teaching. Following the overview sections a findings and observations section looks at the variations in teaching within and across the patrons’ programmes. There is also a clear distinction between the provision of ERB and Ethics content in denominational programmes and multi-denominational programmes. These and other findings are considered in light of the development of an ERB and Ethics curriculum in the final section of this paper.

¹ The Catholic patron is currently developing a programme, *Grow in Love*, that meets the aims, principles and outcomes of the new Catholic curriculum. *Grow in Love* has been introduced to Junior infants and Senior infants from September 2015. The programme will be continued to be developed up to sixth class in the coming years.

Introduction to Patrons' Programmes

The key responsibilities of the patron involves promotion of school ethos within and across the schools under its patronage. A key feature of promoting school ethos is the teaching of the patron's programme during the school day. Patrons have developed programmes that reflect and support the ethos of their schools. The '99 Primary School Curriculum allocates a half hour each day, across all classes of primary school, for the teaching of the patron's programme (1999, p. 70).



In a recent study by the *National Foundation of Educational Research* (NFER), commissioned by NCCA, it was remarked that Ireland is the jurisdiction whose religious education provision incorporates religious instruction to the greatest extent (Grayson et al, 2015, in press). Table 1 below demonstrates that this is the case.

Table 1: Denominational and multi-denominational patrons

Patrons	Denominational Programme	Multi-denominational Programme
Catholic: <i>Alive-O²(Veritas, 1996-2004)</i>	★	
Church of Ireland, Presbyterian, Methodist, Quaker: <i>Follow Me Programme³(Board of Education and the General Synod of the Church of Ireland, 2004-2010)</i>	★	
Educate Together: <i>Learn Together Curriculum (Educate Together, 2004)</i>		★
Community National Schools: <i>Goodness Me, Goodness You! programme (NCCA, 2008-present)</i>		★
Jewish: <i>The Dublin Talmud Torah Jewish Studies Programme</i>	★	
Islamic:		

² Alive-O is the programme currently in place in Catholic primary schools. A new programme, 'Grow in Love', is currently being developed and will be introduced to infant classes in September 2015. This overview has used the new Catholic Preschool and Primary Religious Education Curriculum as it will replace the existing curriculum in the coming years.

³ The Follow Me programme is a Christian inter-denominational programme. It is inter-denominational as it has been agreed by Church of Ireland, Presbyterian, Methodist and Quaker authorities in Ireland. As an agreed Christian curriculum it is categorised as 'denominational' in nature, as its teaching is that of a faith/Christian based perspective.

<i>Islamic Religious Education for Primary Level Programme (Islamic Foundation of Ireland, Yahya Al-Hussein, no date of publication provided)</i>		
John Scottus School Trust: <i>The John Scottus Philosophy Programme (John Scottus School, 1986-present)</i>		

The four denominational programmes combined are taught in approximately 96% of schools, while the three multi-denominational programmes combined are taught in the remaining Irish primary schools (Coolahan et al, 2012). This section provides a brief introduction to each patron’s programme beginning with schools of a denominational ethos, followed by schools of a multi-denominational ethos.

Schools of a denominational ethos

Traditionally it has been the responsibility of the patron to provide a programme that underpins the ethos of their primary schools. As the majority of Irish primary schools are of a denominational ethos the patron’s programme has traditionally been of a denominational and faith based nature (Coolahan et al, 2012, p. 1).

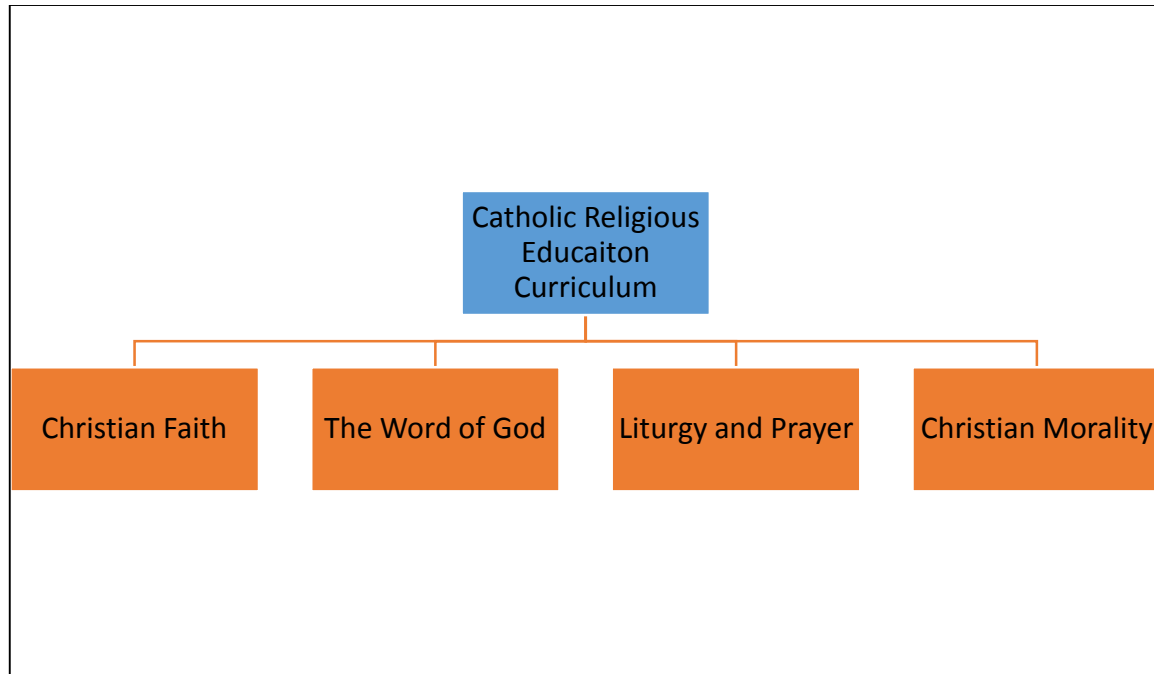
Denominational schools with a Catholic ethos

Schools of a Catholic ethos currently use the *Alive-O* programme, which was developed in the 1990s and has been fully implemented in schools since 2004. The aim of the *Alive-O* programme is to foster and deepen children's faith while enabling children to become fully alive in the presence of God in themselves, in others, in the church and in all creation (Veritas, 1996, p. vi). The programme seeks to evoke a response in children to the presence of God in their lives and promotes knowledge of the Catholic faith, liturgical formation, moral formation, teaching to pray and education for community life.

A new *Catholic Preschool and Primary Religious Education Curriculum for Ireland* has been developed to replace the *Alive-O* programme, and is in the process of final approval from ecclesial authorities. The newly developed curriculum document will be the foundation upon which a new patron’s programme for Catholic schools will be written; this programme will be called ‘*Grow in Love*’. The ‘*Grow in Love*’ Junior and Senior Infant programme is currently being piloted in over 100 schools and is intended to be introduced to all Catholic schools in September 2015. The general aim of the new curriculum is ‘*to help children mature in relation to their spiritual, moral*

and religious lives, through their encounter with, exploration and celebration of the Catholic faith' (Irish Episcopal Press, 2014, p. 22). Figure 1 below provides an overview of the strands in the new Catholic curriculum.

Figure 1: Overview of strands in the new Catholic Religious Education Curriculum



The curriculum presents both general faith-based religious education goals and faith formation goals. It is intended that in the *'Grow in Love'* programme these goals will remain differentiated to accommodate a diversity of belief perspectives in the classroom. As this curriculum will be the foundation for the development of the new *'Grow in Love'* programme this overview focuses on the ERB and Ethics content in the new *Catholic Preschool and Primary Religious Education Curriculum for Ireland*.

Denominational schools with a Church of Ireland, Presbyterian, Methodist and Quaker ethos

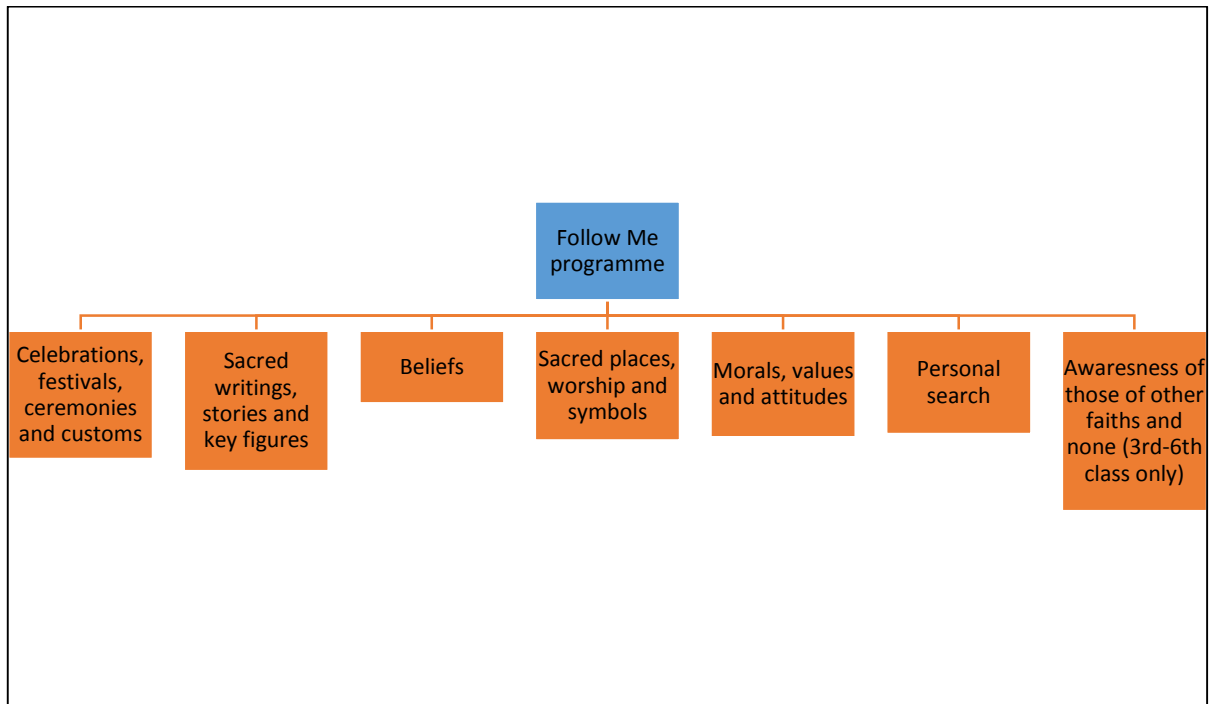
Denominational schools with a Church of Ireland, Presbyterian, Methodist and Quaker ethos use the *Follow Me* programme. The programme was devised by developing and adapting materials from *Alive-O* and with reference to the Scottish and Northern Ireland guidelines for religious and moral education. The aims of the programme are to enable children:

- *to develop a knowledge and understanding of beliefs, worship and witness of the Christian faith, and in particular of the Church of Ireland and other principal reformed traditions*
- *to explore the biblical witness to God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit*

- to develop their own religious beliefs, values and practices through a process of personal search and discovery
- to develop an awareness of and a sensitivity towards those of other faiths and none. (Follow Me, 2010, p. vii)

Figure 2 below outlines the strands found in the *Follow Me* programme.

Figure 2: Overview of the strands in the *Follow Me* programme

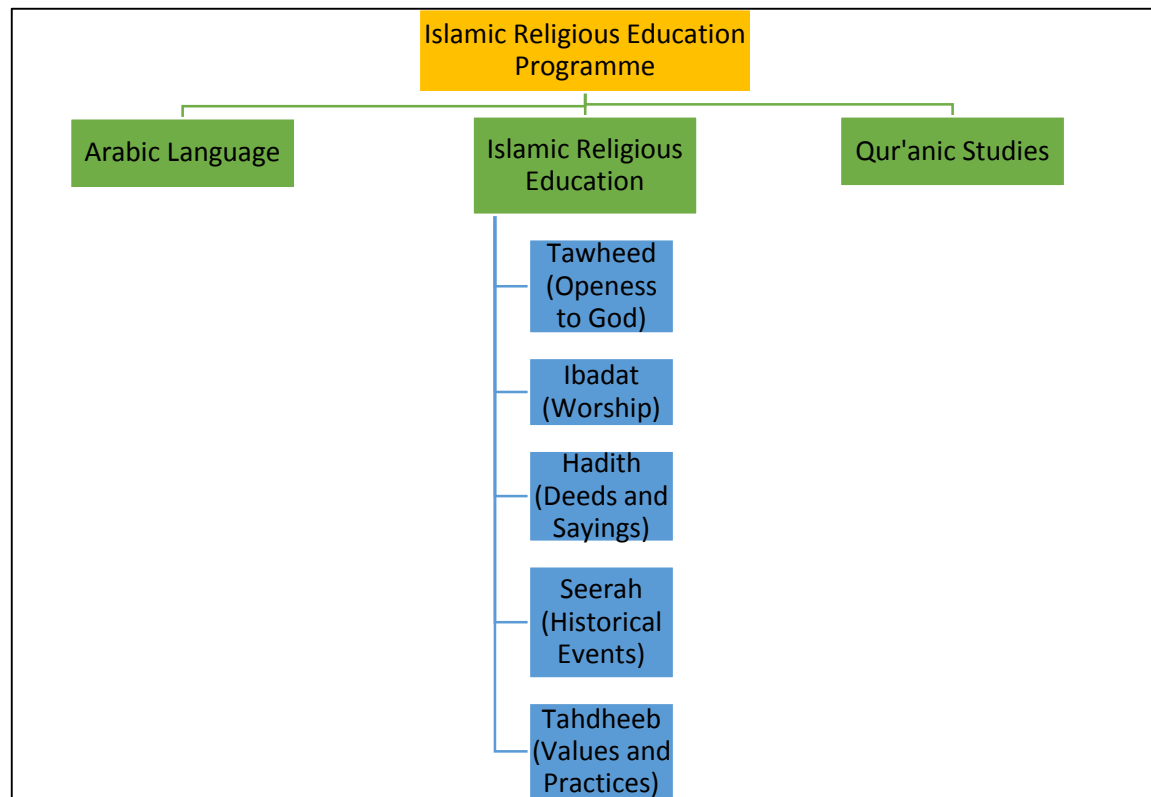


Denominational schools with a Muslim ethos

Denominational schools with a Muslim ethos use the *Islamic Religious Education for Primary Level* programme, as approved by the Islamic Foundation of Ireland. The programme does not explicitly detail aims or principles however the teaching relates to nurturing an Islamic way of being and a deepening of the child’s faith in Islam. The programme has three parts: Qur’anic studies⁴, the Islamic religion (Deen) and Arabic language studies. Within the Islamic Religious Education programme there are five organisers for each level of the programme, these are: *Tawheed (Oneness of God)*, *Ibadat (Worship)*, *Hadith (Teaching of Deeds and Sayings)*, *Seerah (Teaching of Historical Islamic Events)*, *Tahdheeb (Teachings of Values and Practices)*. Figure 3 provides an overview of the structure of the Islamic Religious Education for Primary Level programme.

⁴ Qur’anic Studies relates to the studying of the Qur’an, its memorisation and recitation of it.

Figure 3: Organisational structure of the *Islamic Religious Education programme for primary level*



The Islamic programme is delivered by part-time religious education teachers, with specialist knowledge in Islam.

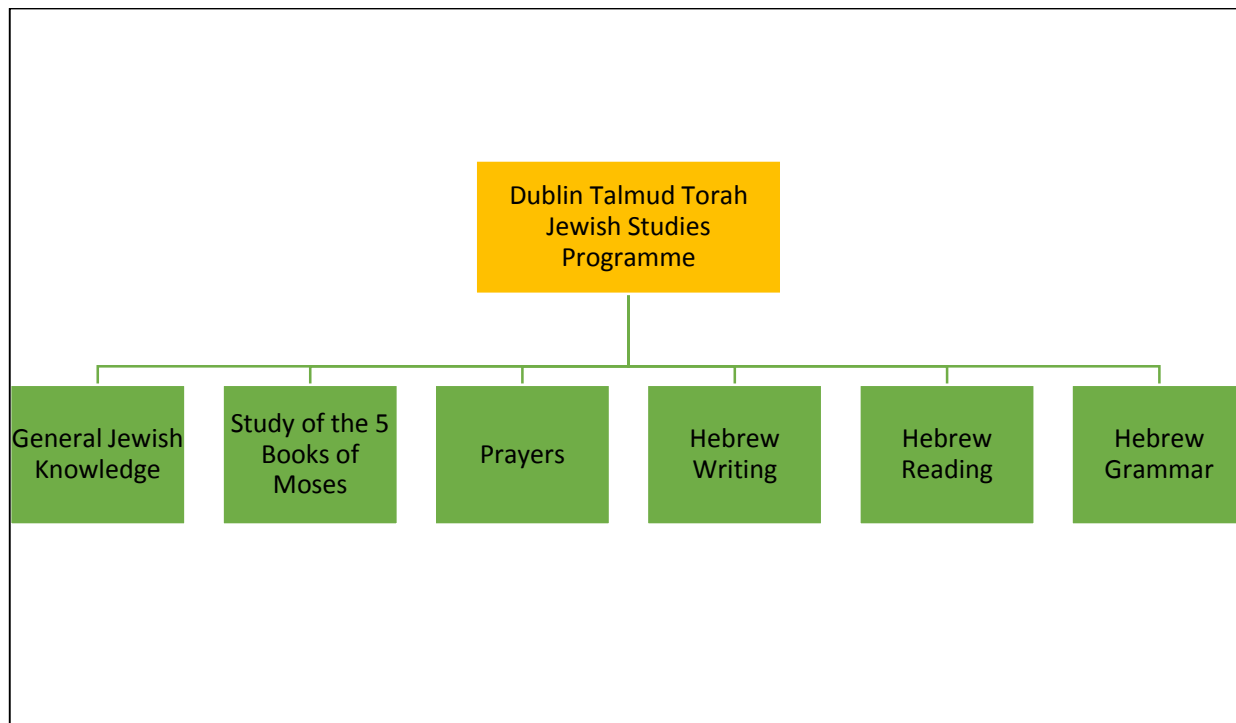
Denominational schools with a Jewish ethos

Denominational schools with a Jewish ethos use the *Dublin Talmud Torah Jewish Studies Programme*. The aims of the programme are listed as follows:

- *to cultivate a love for Jewish learning*
- *to nurture a pride in being part of the Jewish people*
- *to attain a proficiency in Jewish learning and practice by promoting and developing Jewish study skills.* (School Handbook 2014-2015, p. 11)

There are six areas of the religious education programme these are detailed in Figure 4 below.

Figure 4: Overview of the structure of the *Dublin Talmud Torah Jewish Studies Programme*



The programme is delivered by part-time religious education teachers, with specialist knowledge in Hebrew studies.

Schools of a multi-denominational ethos

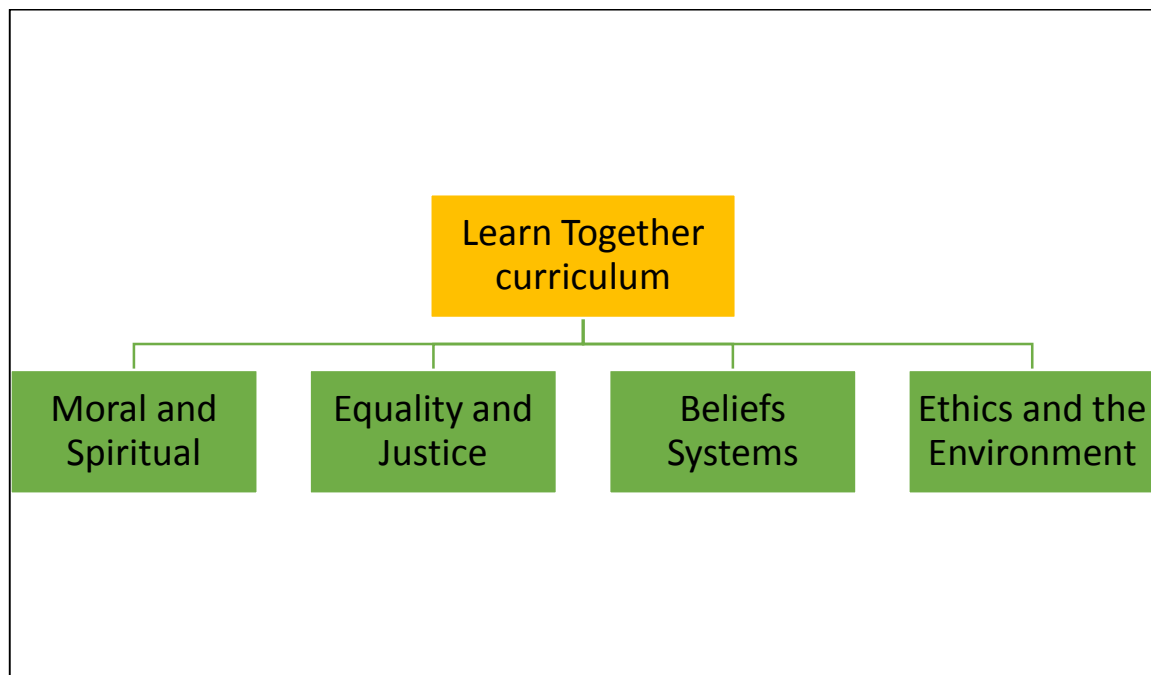
The multi-denominational space is occupied by three patrons (Educate Together, Community National Schools and the John Scottus School Trust). Patrons of these schools have devised religious education, ethical and philosophical programmes underpinning the ethos of their schools.

Multi-denominational schools: Educate Together

Educate Together, established in 1978, have developed *Learn Together* (Educate Together, 2004) which is a rights-based, ethical curriculum for their schools. The general aims of the curriculum centre around a fostering of knowledge and critical understanding of value and belief systems, providing children with the multi-cultural skills needed to enrich society, addressing issues of spirituality and morality, facilitating ethical decision making, enabling children to participate in a democratic process and becoming informed, socially responsible and fair-minded citizens (Educate Together, 2004, p. 10). Educate Together, does not provide for belief-specific education

during the formal school day. There are four strands in the *Learn Together* curriculum as illustrated in Figure 5 below.

Figure 5: Overview of strands in the *Learn Together* curriculum



As *Learn Together* is a curriculum and not a devised programme of study, it is the responsibility of each Educate Together school to develop their programme in line with the aims, principles, strands and strand units described in the *Learn Together* curriculum.

Multi-denominational schools: Community National Schools

Community National Schools, established in 2008, are developing a multi-belief programme called *Goodness Me, Goodness You!* (GMGY) with NCCA, to nurture children of all faiths and none during the school day. Community National Schools value and seek to nurture all dimensions of the child's family and community life, including beliefs and religions. Respect for and celebration of the different beliefs of children is central to the ethos of these schools. This is mirrored in the GMGY programme and the facilitation of inter-faith/belief conversation. The programme has been developed to third class, with development up to 6th class underway. The principles guiding the development of the programme are expressed through the voice of the child as:

I live my childhood in my family, community and country. All are important to me. I want to learn how to participate and contribute.

Help me to understand my traditions and something of the tradition of others, and help others to understand something of mine.

I need to learn how to talk about, ask questions of, listen to and appreciate what people value and believe. (www.gmgy.ie, accessed 1/11/14)

The GMGY programme has a core programme, for use with all children irrespective of their beliefs, and a belief-specific programme providing specific teaching in the faith of the child. The belief-specific programme is taught for between three and four weeks of the year, depending on the age of the child.

Multi-denominational schools: John Scottus School Trust

The John Scottus School Trust founded in Ireland in 1986, has a philosophy based programme promoting the search for knowledge and truth. The school is welcoming ethos to all faiths and religions and so considers itself multi-denominational (John Scottus School Trust Prospectus, p. 3). The programme draws on the great scriptures and literature from both eastern and western traditions. Themes are explored by all children at the same time, in a whole school manner. Some of the themes explored in the programme include:

- Kindness
- Caring
- Fairness
- Being positive
- Patience
- Co-operation
- Helping Others
- Happiness

Although the John Scottus School Trust have a philosophical policy for schools to follow, the programme has continually been revised and changed in line with the needs of the school community.

An Overview of ERB Content in Patrons' Programmes

This section provides an overview of ERB in patrons' programmes. It is organised in line with the ethos of the patron's schools, i.e. denominational and multi-denominational. It should be noted from the outset that both the Islamic and Jewish programmes do not appear to have discrete teaching about other religions and beliefs. This is not to say that such teaching does not occur in the classroom, however from the desktop research conducted there no evidence of provision or guidance for such teaching.

ERB: Denominational programmes

The denominational programmes provide faith-based, religious education and are taught in approximately 3,094 schools in Ireland (Coolahan et al, 2012, p. 29). These include education from a Catholic, Church of Ireland, Presbyterian, Methodist, Quaker, Islamic and Jewish perspective. For these programmes teaching about other religions and beliefs may be an aspect of the programme but it is not intended to be the central focus. This section is organised into three parts: ERB and aims, ERB content and a summary of what religions and beliefs are taught and when.

ERB and Aims

This section presents the aims of patrons' programmes of a denominational perspective and highlights the aims providing for teaching about religions and beliefs. The aims of Religious Education in **Church of Ireland schools** is to enable children:

- *to develop a knowledge and understanding of beliefs, worship and witness of the Christian faith, and in particular of the Church of Ireland and other principal reformed traditions;*
- *to explore the biblical witness to God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit;*
- *to develop their own religious beliefs, values and practices through a process of personal search and discovery;*
- *to develop an awareness of and a sensitivity towards those of other faiths and none. (The Board of Education of the General Synod of the Church of Ireland, 2010, p. vii)*

The final aim referring to those of other faiths and none is the premise upon which teaching about other religions and beliefs in the *Follow Me* programme is based. The inclusion of the reference to those of 'no faith' in the final aim potentially facilitates the exploration of world views other than those of a religious nature.

Similarly in the 'General Aim and Outcomes' of the new **Catholic Preschool and Primary Religious Education Curriculum** two outcomes refer to the education about other religions and beliefs:

- *to acquire a sensitivity to and knowledge of other Christian traditions (ecumenism)*
- *to acquire a sensitivity to some other religious traditions and a basic knowledge of their principal beliefs, spiritual values and traditions (interreligious education)* (Catholic Preschool and Primary Religious Education Curriculum for Ireland, 2014, p. 22).

The second outcome presented relates directly to the '99 Curriculum objective 'that the child should be enabled to develop a knowledge and understanding of his or her own religious traditions and beliefs, with respect for the religious traditions and beliefs of other' (DES, 1999, p. 36).

The Catholic curriculum aims expressed above appear to focus on the teaching of some religious traditions. From the reference to 'religious traditions' it may be inferred that the curriculum may not facilitate the exploration of belief systems other than those of a religious nature. However it should be noted that in the 5th and 6th class strand of 'Christian Faith' in the skills section of 'Developing Interreligious Literacy' it states: 'investigate ways of respecting and learning about and from people who adhere to other religions and belief systems in Ireland' (p. 68). This seems to open the door to learn about belief systems other than those of a religious nature.

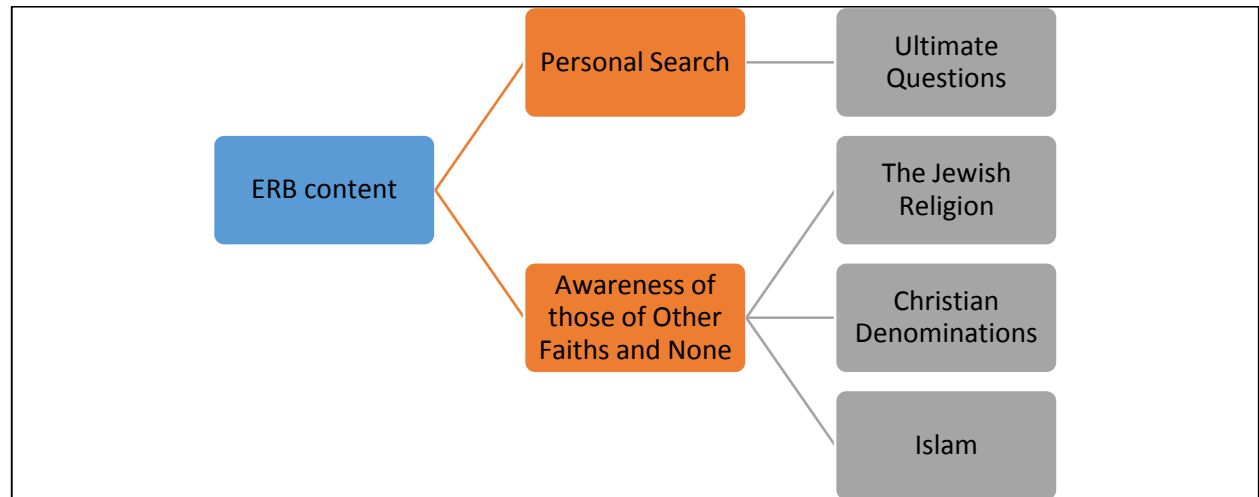
ERB and Programme Content

It is clear from the aims expressed by both the *Follow Me* programme and the Catholic curriculum that the aims upon which they are founded allow for some teaching about other religions and beliefs, to that of their own. Having said this there is a clear variance in the provision for teaching about other religions and beliefs in denominational programmes. While both the Catholic and Church of Ireland programmes provide some teaching, the Islamic and Jewish programmes do not. For both the Islamic and Jewish programmes, the sole focus is on faith formation.

An overview of the strands and strand units in which ERB content within the **Follow Me** series are found are highlighted in Figure 6 below. In the *Follow Me* programme ERB content is found in two

strands namely 'Personal Search' and 'Awareness of those of Other Faiths and None'. Learning about other religions and beliefs is evident in nine of the 80 learning outcomes of the entire *Follow Me* programme. The strand unit 'Ultimate Questions' has three learning outcomes, while the strand 'Awareness of those of Other Faiths and None' has six outcomes, relating to ERB.

Figure 6: Overview of ERB content in *Follow Me* series



Within the material (teacher and pupil books) supplied to NCCA there are five lessons dedicated to the teaching of ERB in the *Follow Me* series. These include an individual lesson on Judaism, Islam, Christian denominations, the Orthodox Church and world religions. The learning outcomes underpinning these lessons from 3rd to 6th class include:

- *to recognise that there are different points of view on religious matters*
- *to be able to listen to the views of others and express their own with growing articulation and confidence*
- *to recognise that religion is essentially about ultimate questions*
- *to understand that people have different faiths and practices or may have none, become aware of this and become sensitive to those of differing faiths in school and community*
- *to become familiar with the names of some of the major world religions*
- *to develop an understanding of Judaism – its celebrations, festivals, ceremonies and customs; sacred writings, stories and key figures; beliefs; sacred places, worship and symbols, moral values and attitudes*

- *to encounter aspects of religious traditions important to other children in the school or neighbourhood.* (The Board of Education of the General Synod of the Church of Ireland, 2005, p. x-xii)

And in 5th and 6th class:

- *to investigate the Sabbath, Passover, synagogue while examining the similarities and difference between Christianity and Judaism*
- *to examine the beliefs of Islam, Ramadan, the Qur'an and the five pillars of Islam.* (The Board of Education of the General Synod of the Church of Ireland, 2007, p. viii-x)

Teaching about other religions and beliefs in the *Follow Me* series comes towards the end of the primary school programme and mostly in the final term of 6th class. The lesson on world religions is taught for one week (2.5 hours) and is outlined as such:

Table 2: Breakdown of world religions lesson in the *Follow Me* 5th and 6th Class Teacher's book

Day	Title of lesson	Time allocated
Monday	World religions	30 minutes
Tuesday	Christianity	30 minutes
Wednesday	I am a Jewish Girl	30 minutes
Thursday	Islam and Hinduism	30 minutes
Friday	Reflection	30 minutes

In all the *Follow Me* programme provides nine of 80 learning outcomes providing ERB content, these outcomes are present in 5 lessons. It is also to be noted that while the aims of the *Follow Me* programme provide space for learning about non-religious beliefs, there is no evidence in the lesson material provided of such provision. It would appear that it is up to teachers and schools to make such links.

Additional lessons in the 5th and 6th Class programme may have the potential for some ERB teaching such as lessons on '*Life's Big Questions*', '*Beliefs*' and '*Peace*'; however from reviewing these lessons the content does not discretely present ERB teaching. It appears it is up to individual teachers to make the connection between the theme of the lesson and the teaching of ERB.

In the new **Catholic curriculum** for Religious Education the teaching about *‘other religious traditions’* is provided for from first class to sixth class in the strand ‘Christian Faith.’ Table 3 below outlines the outcomes⁵ relating to the learning about other religious traditions within the strand.

Table 3: Outcomes within the Christian Faith strand relating to learning about other religions and beliefs

1 st and 2 nd Class	3 rd and 4 th Class	5 th and 6 th Class
<p>Children will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -develop a growing awareness of diversity in beliefs 	<p>Children will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -begin to explore other Christian, Jewish and Muslim communities, developing respect for how they worship -begin to distinguish between a religious and non-religious worldview, showing sensitivity and respect for people who hold beliefs different from their own 	<p>Children will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -develop an understanding of the importance of ecumenical activity and interreligious dialogue and of how religious people work together to create a better world -understand how to express their own faith in the presence of others and to respect the expression of faith and/or belief on the part of others -develop respect for family and community values in other religious traditions -develop knowledge and appropriate vocabulary for the beliefs, holy people, writings and celebrations of local Christian communities and the Jewish and Muslim communities in Ireland.

There is a clear sense of progression evident in these aims, from building awareness of the diversity of beliefs to developing knowledge of and respect for the values and beliefs of other religions.

The new Catholic curriculum incorporates the development of interreligious literacy skills from first class to sixth class. The curriculum states that interreligious education *‘while affirming a student’s Catholic identity, will prepare young children for living alongside other Christians and people of diverse religious traditions’* (Irish Episcopal Press, in press, p. 14). It is intended that the

⁵ In the Catholic Preschool and Primary Religious Education Curriculum, what is generally termed ‘outcomes/objectives’ are labelled as ‘aims’. To avoid confusion with the previous section they are re-labelled here as ‘outcomes.’

development of these skills will be integrated within and across all lessons from first to sixth class. There is a clear sense of the developmental nature of these skills also, as outlined in table 4 below.

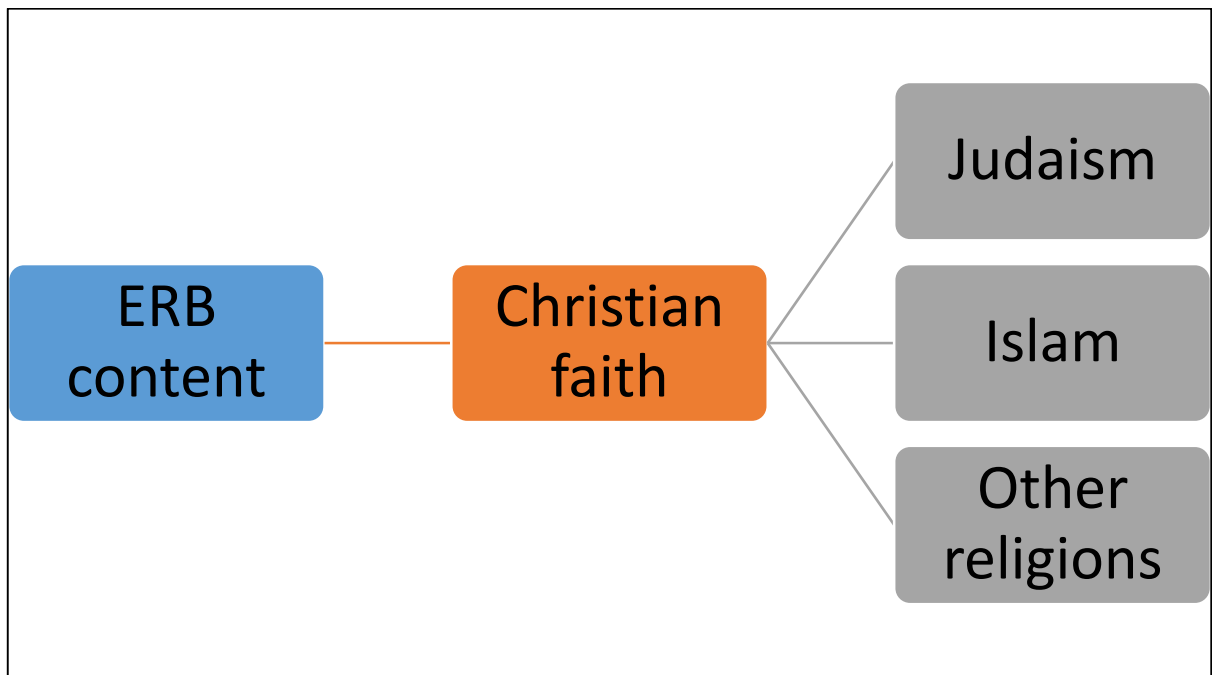
Table 4: Overview of the development of interreligious literacy skills in the new Catholic Religious Education curriculum

1 st and 2 nd Class	3 rd and 4 th Class	5 th and 6 th Class
<p>The child should be enabled to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -identify his/her own religious identity and religious and/or cultural identity of others -identify Christian and other faith communities in his/her locality -listen to and discuss stories about children in a Christian or other faith community (Jewish/Muslim) in Ireland. 	<p>The child should be enabled to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -discuss the importance of religious or philosophical beliefs in the lives of people in his/her community -investigate the religious practice of children in other Christian, Jewish and Muslim communities in Ireland and relating it to his/her own religious practice. 	<p>The child should be enabled to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -research one Christian and one other religious faith community (Jewish/Muslim) -investigate ways of respecting and learning about and from people who adhere to other religions or beliefs systems in Ireland -engage in ecumenical and interfaith activities.

It is intended that the development of these skills will be aided by an 'interreligious link' for the teacher in each lesson of the programme. This link provides teachers with important information pertaining to other religions in relation to the theme of the lesson being taught.

The discrete content for ERB in the Catholic curriculum is outlined in Figure 7 below. It illustrates the three areas for teaching about other religions and beliefs as Judaism, Islam and other religions. The three religions of Christianity, Judaism and Islam are described as *'the three great monotheistic faiths'* (2014, p. 57) and would seem to be the main focus of teaching about religions and beliefs.

Figure 7: ERB content in the new Catholic Preschool and Primary Religious Education Curriculum



Taking an example from the fifth and sixth class programme, the content to be taught in relation to Islam is described as:

Meaning of Islam; Muslim prayer; ninety-nine beautiful names of God – qualities and attributes; The values important to Muslims (good manners, kindness, honesty and respect for others). The Prophet Muhammad; stories of Muhammad; what he taught about God; the Imam. Irish Muslim communities. Fasting and festivals: Ramadan and Eid-al-Fitr. Muslims worship the one God. They venerate Jesus as a prophet, even though they do not acknowledge him as God, and they honour his virgin mother Mary and even sometimes devoutly call upon her. They worship God especially in prayer, almsgiving and fasting (NA 3). Pilgrimage to Mecca. Zakah (caring for the community); faith-based activities of the Irish Muslim communities. Diet (Halal and Haram). The five pillars of Islam. Muslims await the day of judgement and so they have regard for the moral life (NA 3). Id-al-Adha. Ways in which care for others is important in the Muslim faith. (Irish Episcopal Press, p. 73-74)

The content outlined above is extensive. It would seem appropriate that an adequate amount of time be given to covering all aspects of the content outlined above for 5th and 6th class children to understand concepts of the Islamic tradition. The Catholic curriculum specifies the amount of time to spend on the teaching of Judaism, Islam and other religions across the primary school years. This is represented in the table below.

Table 5: Time specified in the new *Catholic Preschool and Primary Religious Education Curriculum for Ireland*

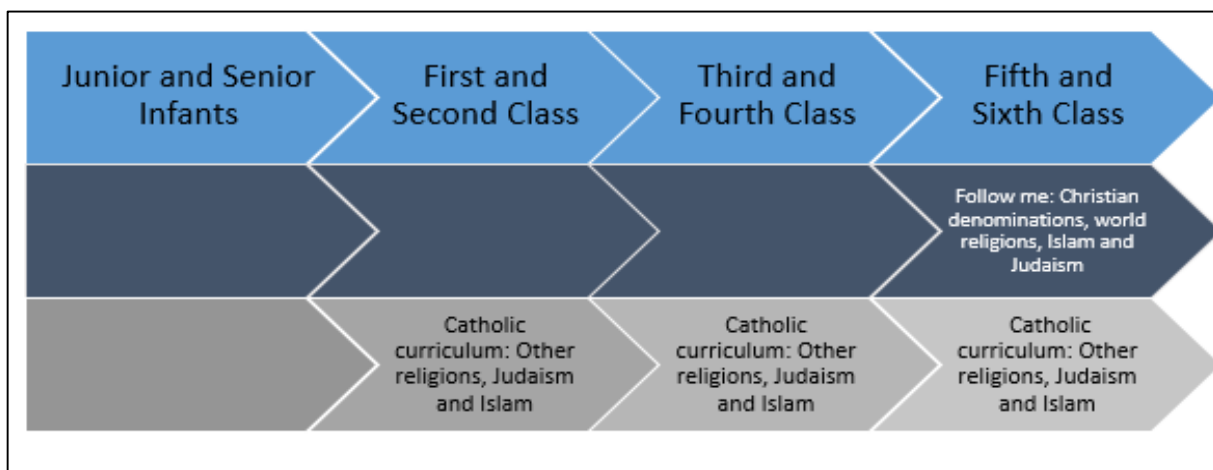
Class	Overall annual time allocation for patrons' programme in primary schools	Annual Time Specified for Teaching about Other Religions
Junior and Senior infants	91.5 hours	0
1 st and 2 nd Class	91.5 hours	1.5 hours
3 rd and 4 th class	91.5 hours	2.5 hours
5 th and 6 th Class	91.5 hours	5 hours
Total	732 hours	18 hours

It appears from the *'Guidelines for Religious Education in a Catholic Primary School Context'* section (2014, p. 18) that the teaching of other religions in the curriculum, in terms of time allocated is a total of 18 hours. As 2.5 hours is allocated weekly to the teaching of the patron's programme the provision of 18 hours for the discrete teaching of other religions in the new Catholic curriculum represents 2.5% of the total time allocated to the teaching of the patrons' programme. As outlined earlier the development of *'interreligious literacy skills'* and the *'interreligious links for teachers'* are intended to combine to foster a balance between implicit and discrete learning about religions and beliefs in the new *'Grow in Love'* Catholic programme.

Summary of Findings

It is clear from analysis of the denominational programmes that emphasis is placed on learning about monotheistic faiths such as Christianity, Judaism and Islam. Although the *Follow Me* programme has learning objectives that include learning about non-faith world views, there are no specific lessons in the programme to meet these objectives. The new Catholic curriculum provides for teaching about other religions from 1st class. It is intended that the objectives outlined in the curriculum are addressed in the programme developed to support Catholic schools its realisation. The religions taught and the levels/classes at which they are introduced is outlined in Figure 8 below.

Figure 8: Teaching about other religions and the levels at which they are introduced in denominational patron programmes



As outlined in Figure 8 above, the *Follow Me* programme introduces teaching about other religions and beliefs in the 5th and 6th Class programme, while the new Catholic curriculum has provided for such teaching incrementally from 1st to 6th class.

ERB: Multi-denominational programmes

The multi-denominational programmes examined in this overview include Educate Together’s ethical curriculum *Learn Together*, the Community National School’s multi-belief programme *Goodness Me, Goodness You!* (GMGY) and the *John Scottus School Trust Philosophical Curriculum*. These programmes are taught in approximately 109 primary schools (Coolahan et al, 2012, p. 29). The John Scottus School Trust states that ‘*no conflict is set up between a family’s religion and the School’s search for truth. This is because the real search is for unifying principles common to all the great faiths of the world*’ (John Scottus Junior School Prospectus, p.3). In the review of documents supplied to NCCA there is no evidence presented to suggest that education about religions and beliefs is provided for in the *John Scottus Philosophical Curriculum*.

ERB and Aims

Although the two patrons (Educate Together, Community National Schools) who provide some ERB fall under the same umbrella term of ‘multi-denominational’ the focus of their programme/curriculum are very different.

For example the eight general aims of **Educate Together’s** curriculum have a clear focus on fostering ethical thinking. One aim in particular relates directly to the teaching of ERB, stating that the curriculum should:

foster in each child a knowledge and understanding of different value and belief systems in an atmosphere of critical enquiry and mutual respect (Educate Together, 2004, p. 10)

This aim creates the space for an enquiry based teaching of 'value and belief systems'. This aim is manifested in a 'Belief Systems' strand, explored in the following section.

The general aim of the **Goodness Me, Goodness You!** programme, in line with the '99 Primary School Curriculum, is 'to enable the child to live a full life as a child and to realise his or her potential as a unique individual' (DES, 1999, p. 7). The guiding principles of the programme highlight the multi-belief nature of the programme:

Community National Schools seek to nurture the development of the whole child, and they value all dimensions of the child's family and community life, including beliefs and religions. The GMGY programme is a practical expression of that support. It emphasises the important role of religions and beliefs in children's lives and helps to nurture those beliefs.

Parents are the primary educators of their children, and families and communities are responsible for passing on traditions, values and beliefs. The GMGY programme seeks to complement that important work. Parents and families, in their turn have a role in supporting GMGY in schools.

Inter-religious dialogue, and dialogue between religions and belief systems, is central to the GMGY approach. The programme aims to contribute to the development of Ireland as a pluralist society, based on an appreciation of the value of different languages, cultures, ethnicities, religions and belief systems, and of the interaction between them.

The GMGY programme is being developed with schools using an action research approach. Teachers and principals working with the programme are also shaping it through their reflections and observations. Parents and children, through their feedback are also contributing. All of the schools are Community National Schools, but each school is also unique. The programme needs to be flexible enough to evolve over time, and to support the particular needs of each school. (GMGY Guiding Principles, www.gmgry.ie, accessed 1/11/14)

The focus of the GMGY programme is to nurture children of all faiths and none. The third principle listed above provides for the creation of a space in which children can think and talk about their beliefs in a safe and respectful learning environment. This is an important aspect of ERB teaching.

It would seem from examining the two approaches to ERB above, *Learn Together* is an enquiry based approach to learning 'about' religions and beliefs, while the GMGY programme is closer to an exploration of personal beliefs which can be described as learning 'from' religion and beliefs. Both programmes place an emphasis on the important learning ERB can have for children in

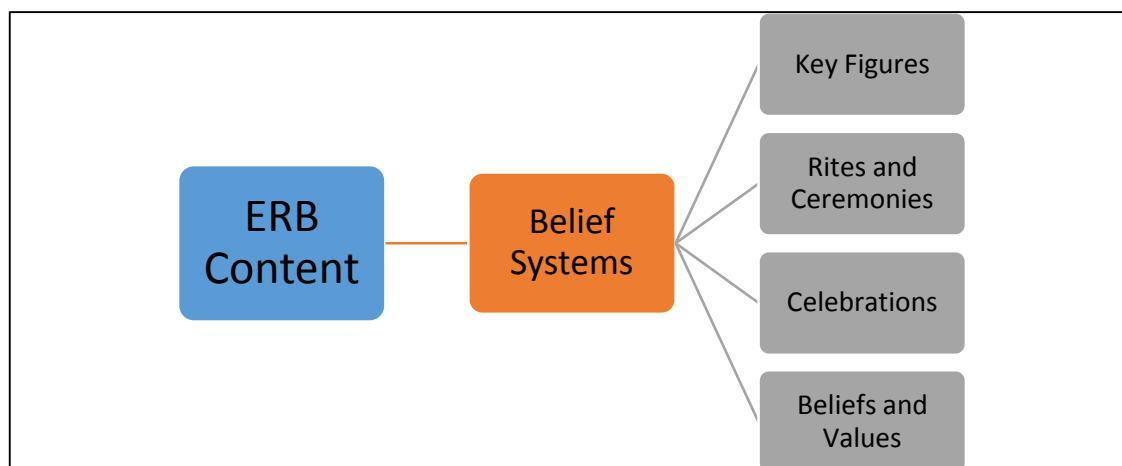
primary schools both in terms of religion and beliefs as a cultural phenomenon (learning about religions) and as a personal exploration of belief (learning from religion).

ERB and Programme Content

There is a clear variance in the provision for teaching about other religions and beliefs in the multi-denominational programmes. While both *Learn Together* and *Goodness Me, Goodness You!* provide for education about religions and beliefs, the provision for such teaching is organised in very different ways.

The *Learn Together* curriculum advocates a comparative approach to teaching about religions and beliefs. The strand 'Belief Systems' provides the majority of teaching about religions and beliefs in the curriculum. Figure 9 presents the Belief Systems strand and its strand units.

Figure 9: Overview of strand and strand units relating to ERB in the *Learn Together* curriculum



The *Learn Together* curriculum has been developed using the spiral approach to curriculum design. This means the strand of Belief Systems and its units remain constant from Junior Infants to Sixth Class. There is also evidence of a developmental approach of the curriculum, for example in the strand unit of 'Rites and Ceremonies' a learning outcome for a Junior and Senior Infant child is:

'The child shall be enabled to:

*Identify and recognise the symbols associated with the major belief systems
e.g. buildings, dress, books'*

While a Fifth and Sixth Class child:

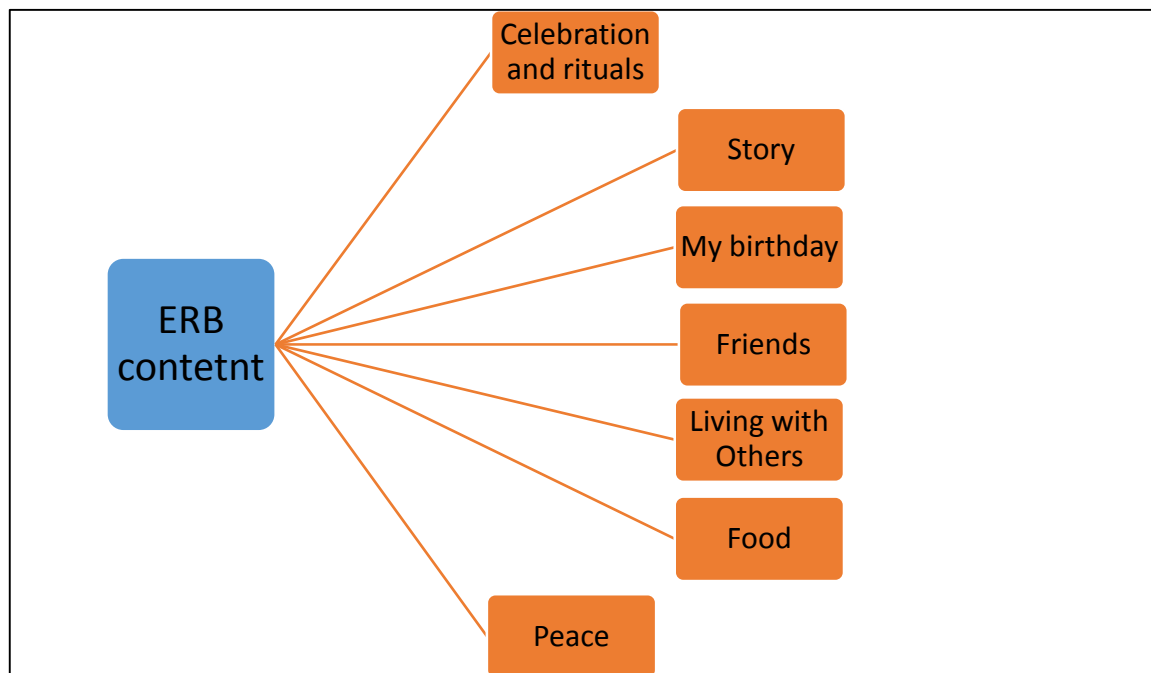
'shall be enabled to:

Discuss the similarities and differences across major belief systems in respect of ritual and ceremony and identify any common links between these rites' (Educate Together Curriculum, 2004, p. 37)

There are 44 learning outcomes in the Belief Systems strand, out of a total of 171 outcomes in the *Learn Together* curriculum, this represents approximately 25% of the curriculum. *Learn Together* recommends that each school should design and develop school policies that reflect the values inherent in the Ethical Education Curriculum (Educate Together, 2004, p. 14). The curriculum supports schools to develop locally their individual school programmes within the framework of the *Learn Together* curriculum, this places much onus on each school to develop a school programme that is ethical, balanced and fair.

The ***Goodness Me, Goodness You!*** programme used in Community National Schools takes a different approach to the learning about religions and beliefs. GMGY attempts to nurture a child's faith and beliefs through the use of story and other forms of narrative expression. The narrative supports conversations that link to the child's experience and their beliefs about their world.

Figure 10: Overview of lesson themes relating to ERB in the *Goodness Me, Goodness You!* programme



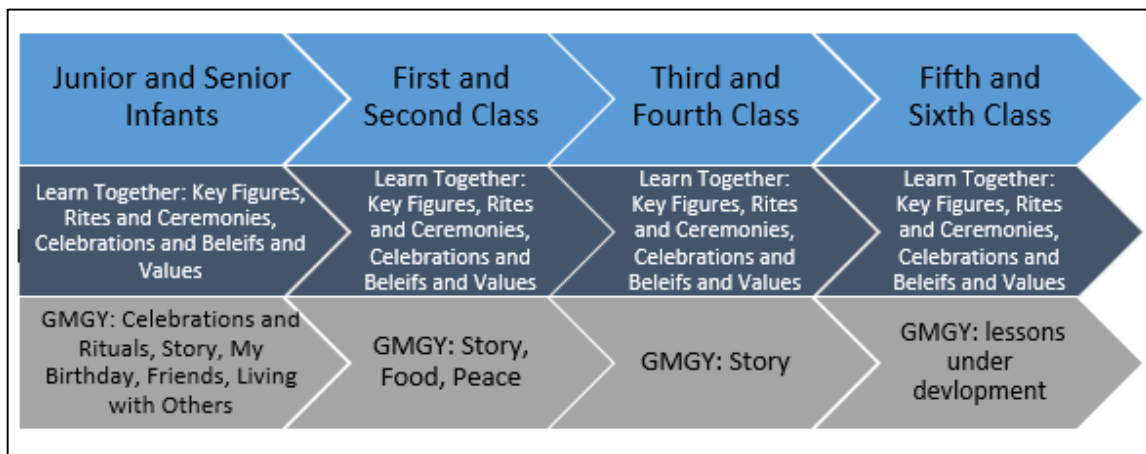
These themes represent 17 lessons of a total of 109 in the GMGY programme from Junior Infants to Third Class that provide discrete ERB content, this represents approximately 15% of the programme. The programme from 4th to 6th Class is currently under development and it is

intended there will be an increased amount of discrete lessons about world religions and belief systems.

Summary of Findings

Both *Learn Together* and *Goodness Me, Goodness You!* make provision for teaching about religions and beliefs from Junior Infants to 6th class.⁶ The approach taken in the *Learn Together* curriculum allows for an enquiry-based teaching of religions and beliefs through the strands units of *key figures, rites and ceremonies, celebrations, and beliefs and values*. The approach taken in *Goodness Me Goodness You!* allows for the exploration of different faith and non-faith perspectives from the experience of the child. In GMGY, there is no direct outlining, as such, of when and where ‘other religions and beliefs’ are explored. Instead the programme encourages children to bring their own faith perspective into the shared experience of the classroom. Figure 11 provides an overview of the strands and strand units that contain teaching of ERB in multi-denominational schools.

Figure 11: Teaching about religions and beliefs and the levels at which they are introduced in multi-denominational patron programmes



⁶ Although the *Goodness Me, Goodness You!* programme has not been developed to 6th class, the guiding principles for the programme allow provision for such teaching.

An Overview of Ethics Content

This section provides an overview of the ethical education content found in patrons' programmes. The teaching of ethics includes the formation in and the promotion of a personal commitment to the dignity and freedom of all human beings, the importance of human rights, the place of justice within society, and the service of the common good. Ethics is often a principle of curricula or programmes and may be developed on ethical grounds. For the purposes of this overview, the focus is on discrete ethical teaching in the patrons' programmes, while acknowledging that much ethical education may be implicit during and outside the patron's time. In line with the previous section, the discussion begins with schools of a denominational ethos, followed by schools with a multi-denominational ethos.

Ethics: Denominational programmes

It is evident from the documentation reviewed that important teachings of morality and values are provided for in denominational school programmes. The teaching of morality and values through a faith lens in Ireland relate to 'character education.' This teaching is foregrounded in many strands and lessons of the programmes reviewed. Many of these lessons are founded upon religious beliefs and as such are not appropriate to teach to those of other faiths or none. Ethical education, while often compatible with faith-based traditions of moral education, may be seen as something distinct and independent of such faith teachings, especially in the context of State education.

Ethics and Aims

This section presents the aims of patrons' programmes of a denominational perspective relevant to the Ethics Education. In the new Catholic Preschool and Primary Religious Education Curriculum for Ireland there are two '*desired outcomes*' listed under the '*general aims*' of the curriculum that relate to Ethics Education. These are listed as:

'children will, in a way appropriate to age, maturity and faith development:

- *develop virtue, personal and social responsibility, ecological consciousness and the ability to act in accordance with an informed conscience when making moral decision as a child.*

- *develop Christian attitudes and values: for example, love, justice, compassion, truthfulness and respect.* (Irish Episcopal Press, in press, p. 22)

The two desired outcomes of the general aim of the curriculum relate to Ethics Education from a faith perspective. These aims are manifested in a strand called *‘Christian Morality’* outlined in the following section.

The *Follow Me* programme, although not having any aims that directly address Ethics Education does have two strands that provides some ethical content, namely *‘Morals, Values and Attitudes’* and *‘Personal Search’*. Both of these strands are outlined in the following section.

The *Islamic Religious Education for Primary Level* programme does not explicitly detail aims or principles. However, there is some ethical content in the programme and this is also outlined in the following section.

Ethics and Programme Content

Much of the ethical education in the new **Catholic Religious Education curriculum** is found in the strand of *‘Christian Morality.’* Examples of the aims (expressed as outcomes) in this strand across the levels of primary school are detailed in the table below.

Table 8: Examples of aims relating to ethics education in the ‘Christian Morality’ strand in the new Catholic Religious Education curriculum (Irish Episcopal Press, in press, p. 33, 51, 65, 84)

Level	Aim- Children will:
Junior and Senior Infants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ develop their concern for others, for animals and for the natural environment (moral awareness, ecological awareness; mission and social justice orientation) ▪ develop empathy, a sense of justice, fairness, friendship, healthy attitudes to diversity and peace-making skills ▪ develop an understanding of rules and of right and wrong behaviour.
1st and 2nd Class	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ explore the stories of holy people and saints as people who live in the way of Jesus (modelling) ▪ become aware of moral failure, of the need for forgiveness and appreciate the Mercy of God ▪ reflect on their freedom to make choices and the relationship between choice and consequence (freedom of choice and human responsibility; agency, self-reflection; moral judgement)
3rd and 4th Class	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ develop their understanding of freedom of choice, sin, moral judgement and human responsibility ▪ begin to develop an ethic that respects, defends, and promotes the rights and wellbeing of every person regardless of gender, race, social status, personal achievement or social contribution (justice orientation)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> co-ordinate concerns for equity (taking into account the special needs, situations or contributions of others) with reciprocity in structuring moral decisions
5th and 6th Class	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> begin to incorporate moral ideals of conduct into their identity (moral self-reflection). develop their concepts of personal sin, grace and conversion develop an awareness of social justice, ecological justice, universal solidarity and responsibility develop an understanding of human sexuality in a moral, spiritual and social framework with particular emphasis on the virtue of chastity (RSE).

The aims (expressed as outcomes) above from the *‘Christian Morality’* strand are expansive and comprehensive in nature. Two outcomes from the 5th and 6th class curriculum is an example of the breadth of the statements, stating that children will:

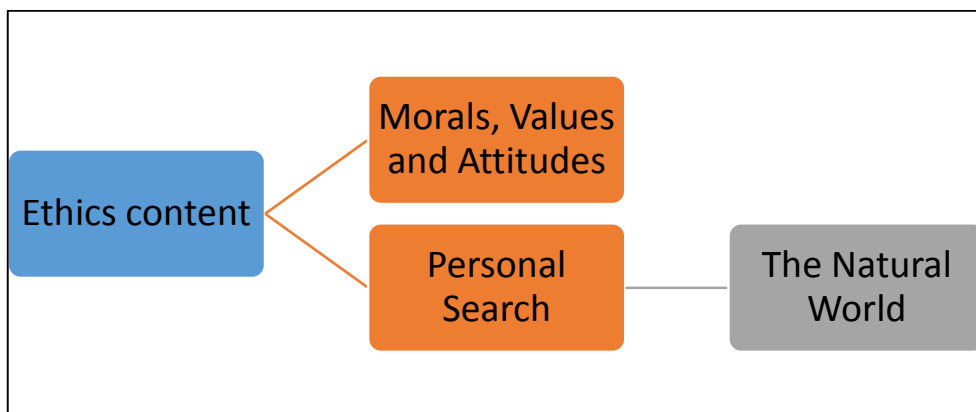
‘develop their concepts of personal sin, grace and conversion’

‘develop an awareness of social justice, ecological justice, universal solidarity and responsibility’ (Irish Episcopal Press, in press, p.84)

Within these two aims there is reference to both the personal journey and exploratory nature of ethical education, as well as the environmental and universal aspects to living in a changing and sometimes unjust world.

Ethical education in the **Follow Me** programme is found in two strands namely *‘Moral, Values and Attitudes’* and *‘Personal Search.’*

Figure 12: Strands and strand units in which ethics education is present in the *Follow Me* programme



Examples of learning outcomes underpinning the lessons in these strands include that the child should be enabled to:

Begin to become aware of and experience values such as sharing, caring, love and forgiveness (Junior and Senior Infants)

Respond to Bible stories which illustrate moral values and attitudes and relate these to their own experience (1st and 2nd Class)

reflect on human dependence upon, and responsibility for, planet earth (3rd and 4th Class)

show awareness of particular environmental issues and human responsibility for them (3rd and 4th Class) (The Board of Education of the General Synod of the Church of Ireland, 2005, p. x-xii)

The examples chosen are presented in the *Follow Me* programme from 3rd-6th Class. However there is little evidence of lessons in the 5th and 6th class programme addressing these outcomes. An example of provision for ethics education from a denominational lens is evident in the table below, found in the 3rd and 4th Class programme.

Table 6: Examples of ethics education in the *Follow Me* programme

Title	What am I trying to do?	Why?
Caring for God's Creation	<p>To continue the work from lesson 1, which focused on God's creation</p> <p>To encourage the children to think about their roles as stewards of God's creation</p> <p>To enable them to begin the task of planning a Harvest Celebration based on their work during the week.</p>	<p>So that the children will develop a sense of responsibility for God's world</p> <p>So that they will voice their sense of responsibility through discussion and creative response and through prayer and worship.</p>
Peace and Reconciliation	<p>To think about the themes of peace: world peace and personal peace with the children</p> <p>To use Bible references to focus on the hope for peace and reconciliation that is given in the Bible</p> <p>To look at examples of peacemakers and those working for reconciliation.</p>	<p>Children will think about the need for peace in the world and in their own lives and relationships</p> <p>Children will know the stories of some peacemakers.</p>

It is evident from the examples above that within the strand of '*Personal Search*' the focus remains within a faith perspective. This perspective is entirely appropriate for those of the faith perspective, however it provides challenges for those who are not of that faith background.

The *Islamic Religious Education for Primary Level* programme does not explicitly detail aims or principles however it is clear from reviewing the documentation that the teaching relates to

nurturing an Islamic way of being and a deepening of the child’s faith in Islam. Within the Islamic Religious Education programme there are five organisers for each level of the programme, these are: *Tawheed (Oneness of God)*, *Ibadat (Worship)*, *Hadith (Teaching of Deeds and Sayings)*, *Seerah (Teaching of Historical Events)*, *Tahdheeb (Teachings of Values and Practices)*. The teaching of values and practices in *Tahdheeb* begins in Junior Infants and centres on the theme of Relationships. Examples of lessons in this theme are found in table 7 below.

Table 7: Examples of Tahdheeb lessons in the Islamic Religious Education programme

Class	Title/focus of lesson	Class	Title/focus of lesson
Junior Infants	Love and respect for parents	Third Class	Caring for parents Muslims are brothers
Senior Infants	Greetings	Fourth Class	Respect for the elder Kindness to the young
First Class	Helping parents	Fifth Class	Telling the truth Choosing friends
Second Class	Obeying parents Kindness to animals	Sixth Class	Sharing and generosity Avoidance of cheating

As is evident from the table above, and from reviewing the documentation provided, the Islamic Religious Education programme has a focus on how to foster a way of living as a person of the Islamic faith. In addition to the examples above there are also lessons detailing how to make wud’u (cleansing before prayer), how to eat as a Muslim and how to pray as a Muslim.

Summary of Findings

It is clear from the overview provided of each of the patron’s programme above, and from a review of the documentation submitted, that there is some variance in the amount and quality of provision in relation to ethics education in denominational programmes. Some programmes have the provision to explore in great detail the ethical complexities of living in a diverse, contemporary society. While others tend to focus on quite instructive methods of providing guidance on how to live in accordance with the beliefs of the given religion.

Ethics: Multi-denominational programmes

The multi-denominational programmes reviewed all include provision for ethical education, although using quite different approaches. This section provides an overview of the provision for ethics education in multi-denominational patron programmes.

Ethics and Aims

This section outlines the aims of multi-denominational programmes relevant to Ethics Education. The **Learn Together** ethical curriculum has six general aims that relate to Ethics Education, these are stated as:

The programme should:

- *prepare children to become caring members of a multicultural society with the necessary intercultural skills to enrich such a society*
- *address issues of spirituality and morality*
- *facilitate in children the ability to make reasoned and informed moral judgements*
- *raise awareness in children of issues of human rights, justice and equality in society*
- *develop in children an ethical and reasoned approach to caring for the environment*
- *provide children with a range of dispositions and skills to enable them to participate in and contribute to the democratic process and become informed, socially responsible and fair-minded citizens. (Educate Together, 2004, p. 10).*

These aims are realised in three strands of the curriculum namely, '*Moral and Spiritual*', '*Equality and Justice*' and '*Ethics and the Environment*.' These strands are outlined in the following section.

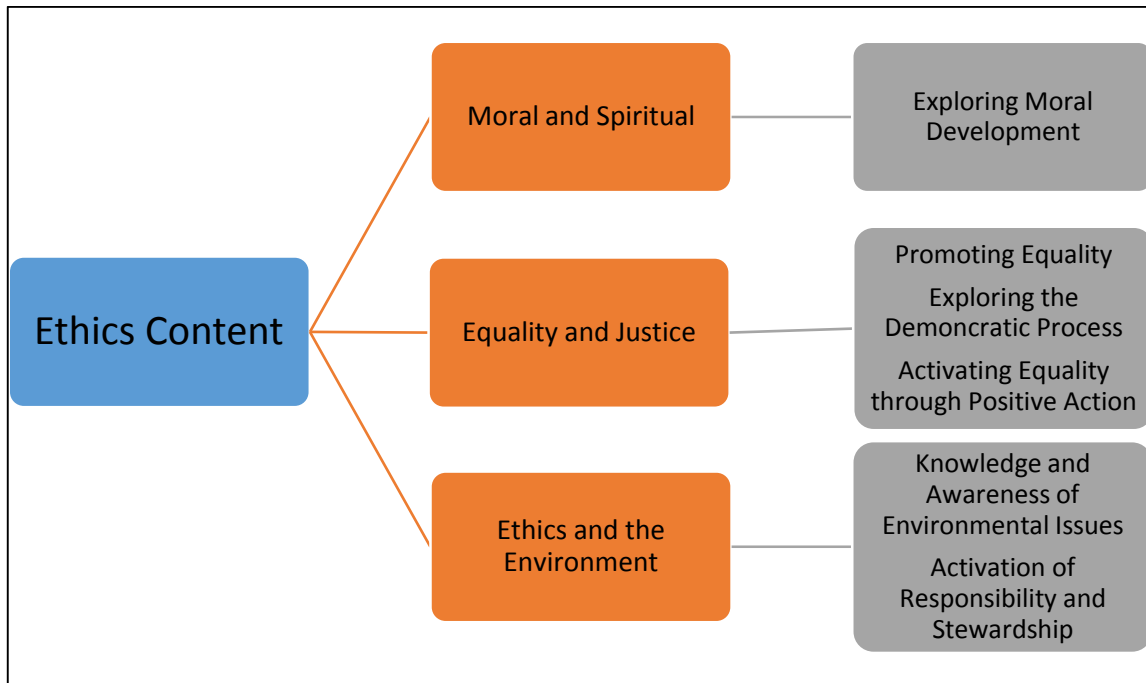
The general aim of the **Goodness Me, Goodness You!** programme is '*to enable the child to live a full life as a child and to realise his or her potential as a unique individual*' (DES, 1999, p. 7). Although the programme does not detail specific aims relating to Ethics Education, there are themes and lessons relating to such teaching and these are outlined in the following section.

The John Scottus School Trust Philosophical Programme has a founding principle '*that everyone is in essence pure, perfect and complete and that providing good material is all that is needed to connect with this inner essence and to allow it to grow*' (John Scottus School Trust Prospectus, p. 3). This principle is the basis on which the exploration of ethical issues of the world are explored using Socratic methods. Examples of themes explored in the programme are outlined in the following section.

Ethics and Programme Content

The ***Learn Together*** ethical curriculum, taught in Educate Together schools, provides a rights-based approach to ethical education. There is considerable treatment of ethical content in the curriculum, in three of the four strands in particular. Both the ‘*Moral and Spiritual*’ strand and the ‘*Equality and Justice*’ strand relate to the self and to living ethically within a society. A third strand, ‘*Ethics and the Environment*’ places emphasis on stewardship and responsibility for the world we live in. Figure 13 below provides an overview of the strands and strand units in which ethical content is provided for in the *Learn Together* curriculum.

Figure 13: Overview of strands and strand units relating to ethics in the *Learn Together* curriculum



The curriculum focuses on the development of ethical understanding from Junior Infants to 6th Class. Table 9 below provides two examples of progression in curriculum content through primary school.

Table 9: Examples of progression of curriculum content from Junior Infants to 6th Class in the *Learn Together* curriculum

Strand: Equality and Justice			
Strand Unit: Exploring Human Rights			
Junior and Senior Infants	1 st and 2 nd Class	3 rd and 4 th Class	5 th and 6 th Class
<i>This strand unit enables children to:</i>			
explore the concept of the reciprocity of rights through recognition of the importance of each individual in the class.	identity and name basic rights.	further develop the concept of rights and responsibilities and to understand the universality of rights.	understand in addition to basic rights there are also: developmental rights, participation rights and protection rights.
Strand: Ethics and the Environment			
Strand Unit: Knowledge and Awareness of Environmental Issues			
Junior and Senior Infants	1 st and 2 nd Class	3 rd and 4 th Class	5 th and 6 th Class
<i>This strand unit enables children to:</i>			
to develop an appreciation for the world we live in.	promote responsibility for our environment.	explore the human impact on the environment.	develop an understanding of conservation and inter-dependence.

The rights-based approach provides an understanding of the rights of all human beings and the responsibilities endowed with such rights. There is also a ‘*call to action*’ and pro-active approach advocated as children progress through primary school. Examples of this form of social participation in the ‘*Equality and Justice*’ strand include to:

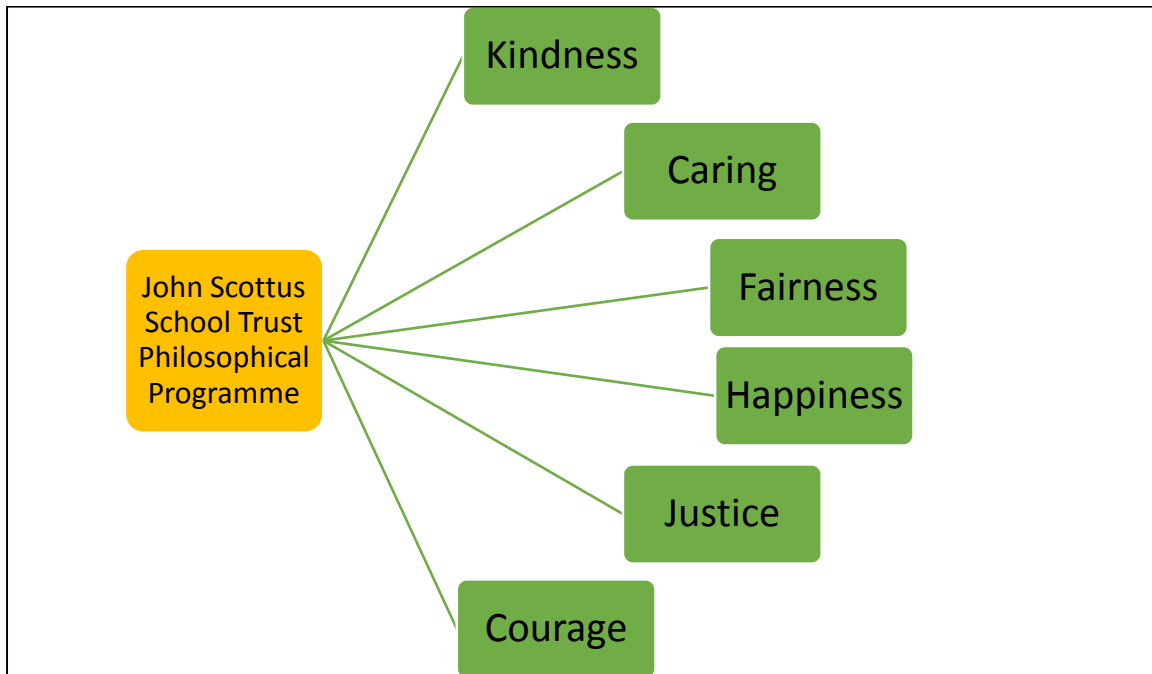
- *‘engage with local issues such as the provision of facilities for the children of the locality*
- *develop the skills required to make submissions to the a National Body such as the office of The Children’s Ombudsman or Minister for Health and Children*
- *examine an equality issue in relation to minorities in Ireland*
- *express his/her views by writing letters to elected representatives on issues to equality.’ (Learn Together, p. 28-32)*

The promotion of social participation in democratic processes in the *Learn Together* curriculum aims to promote a critical knowledge and understanding of social issues and ultimately to empower children to make a difference.

The **John Scottus School Trust’s programme** provides a different form of ethical education to that of the rights based approach of the *Learn Together* curriculum. The programme explores ethical issues

from a philosophical perspective. Using the Socratic method of philosophical reasoning and exploration, the programme fosters discussion towards truth. Examples of the themes explored in the teaching of the philosophical programme are detailed in Figure 14 below.

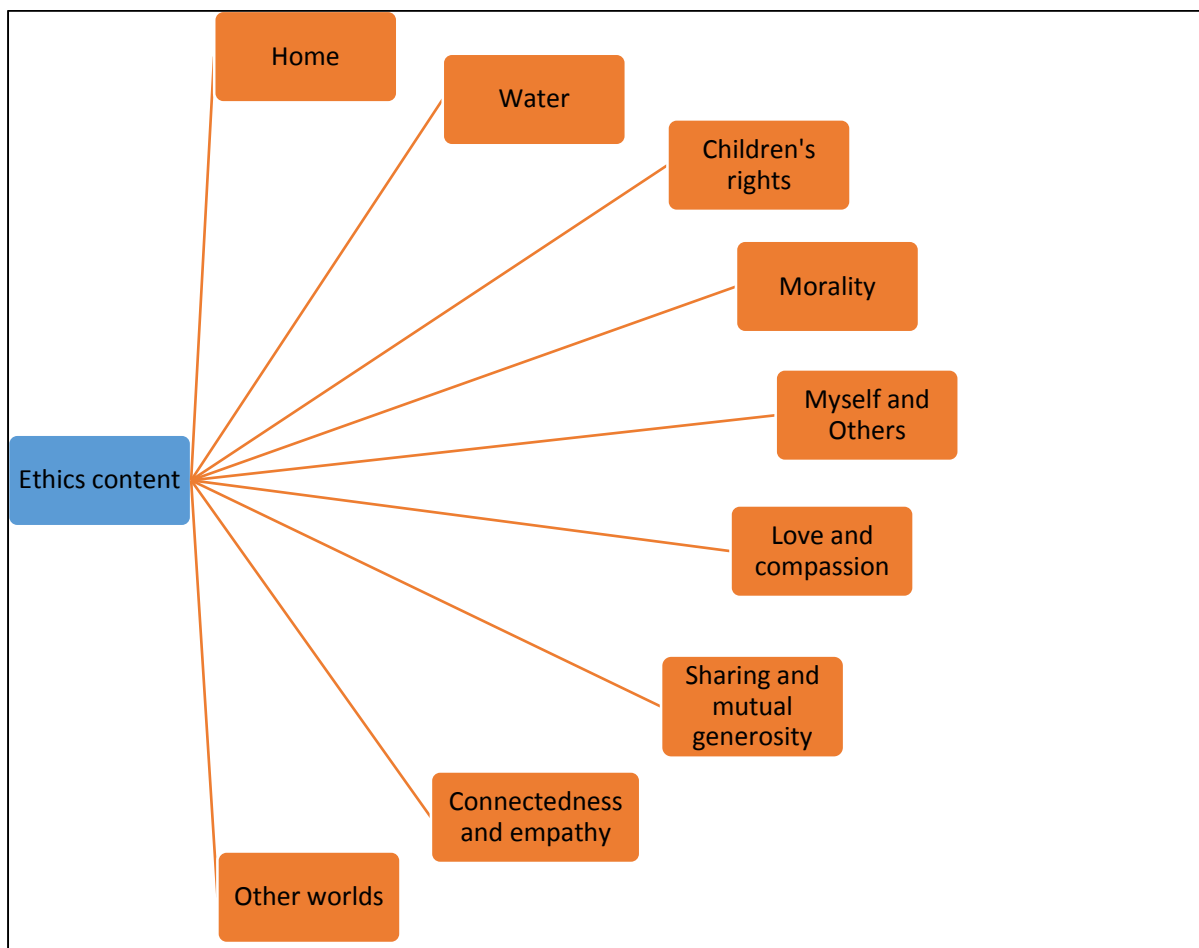
Figure 14: Examples of ethical themes explored in the John Scottus School Trust Philosophical Programme



The programme '*develops the inner person through considering words and works of wisdom in light of children's practical day-to-day experience*' (John Scottus School Trust Prospectus, p. 11).

The Community National Schools ***Goodness Me, Goodness You!*** programme, presents a pluralistic approach to ethics education. This approach draws from the experience of children participating in lessons and fosters conversation around ethical issues which are not biased towards one particular faith or belief tradition. Children are invited to engage with the conversation from their perspective—religious or otherwise. Examples of themes relating to ethical education in the *Goodness Me, Goodness You!* programme are provided in Figure 15 below.

Figure 15: Examples of themes in *Goodness Me, Goodness You!* relating to ethics education



These themes do not cross-cut the eight years of primary school, instead they are emphasised at different points of the child’s development. Examples of learning outcomes associated with the themes above are detailed in Table 10 below.

Table 10: Examples of learning outcomes relating to ethics education in the *Goodness Me, Goodness You!* programme

Level	Strand	Overview of Learning Outcome/Objective/Intention:
Senior Infant	Water	This lesson offers children an opportunity to explore something of the diversity of life supported by water, so that they may grow in awareness and appreciation of the resource that water is.
Senior Infant	Children’s Rights	This lesson introduces the concept of their and other children’s rights, so that they may come to value and celebrate their common global citizenship.
First Class	Morality	This lesson offers children an opportunity to explore their experience of being loving and forgiving, so that they may grow naturally in love and moral capacity.

Second Class	Love and Compassion	This lesson explores children’s experience of loving compassion, so that they may begin to reflect on ways that people are hungry-not only for food, but also for other expressions of love.
Second Class	Generosity and Abundance	This lesson explores with the children their experience of generosity and abundance; so they may begin to recognise ways in which the flow of giving and receiving means that everyone can have more than enough.
Third Class	Connectedness and Empathy	This lesson offers children the opportunity to explore the world from different points of view, so that they may become aware of the wider picture and grow in appreciation of the wonder and awe of the world around us.

Although the learning outcomes above provide the basis for discrete content of an ethical nature, the implicit teaching of ethics from a pluralist perspective is an ongoing feature in the GMGY programme. Parents have a significant role to play in the development of the learning at home and in line with the beliefs of the parents and their family.

Summary of findings

It is evident that within the multi-denominational space there are a variety of approaches to ethics education. The rights-based approach of the *Learn Together* curriculum promotes critical knowledge in and understanding of children’s and human rights, while also promoting a pro-active approach to living in a democratic society. The John Scottus School Trust’s Socratic approach promotes the search for truth and meaning through deep thinking about ethical issues that arise when living in a diverse society. The *Goodness Me, Goodness You!* programme promotes a pluralist approach in which children are invited to engage with ethical issues from their perspective, while considering the perspectives of others. The three approaches, while having their own strengths and weaknesses, have much to offer a national curriculum for ethics. All three foster an inclusive approach to ethics education in which children can engage, regardless of their faith perspective.

Conclusion

This paper provides an overview of Education about Religions and Beliefs (ERB) and Ethics Education in patrons' programmes. Five programmes/curricula were examined namely the new *Catholic Religious Education Curriculum*, the *Follow Me* programme, the *Islamic Foundation of Ireland Primary Programme*, *Goodness Me, Goodness You!*, *Learn Together* and the *John Scottus School Trust Philosophical Programme*.

From the outset, differences have been noted in how the various programmes are presented and organised. Some are presented as curricula organised by strands and units, while others are presented as programmes organised by themes and lessons. Due to the variety of formats used, it proved challenging to align the provision of ERB and Ethics content across patrons' programmes. While this paper did not set out to compare, contrast or rank provision for ERB and Ethics across programmes, some general findings, observations and considerations for the development of an ERB and Ethics curriculum have been identified.

A general finding concerns the variation in the autonomy afforded to schools in mediating patrons' programmes. Some patrons place an onus on schools to develop programmes locally in line with the needs of the school community and within the framework of the curricula provided by the patron; while others provide detailed programmes for schools and teachers to follow. There is also a great variety in the supports provided for schools and teachers in the mediation of the patrons' programmes. Some patrons provide online resources, schools visits/inspections, teacher guidelines and pupil books, while others are limited by resources in the amount of support they can provide. There is also a variation in the review and evaluation process by patrons of their programmes. Some patrons have recently reviewed and updated their programmes internally, others have developed a completely new curriculum, while others have commissioned external examinations of the effectiveness of their programmes. Finally, as a general finding, there is variation in the epistemological approaches advocated in teaching about religions and beliefs and ethics across patrons' programmes. There is evidence of socio-cultural, Socratic, pluralist, human rights and faith-based approaches. The approaches supported by the patron's programme clearly have implications for the teaching of an ERB and Ethics curriculum.

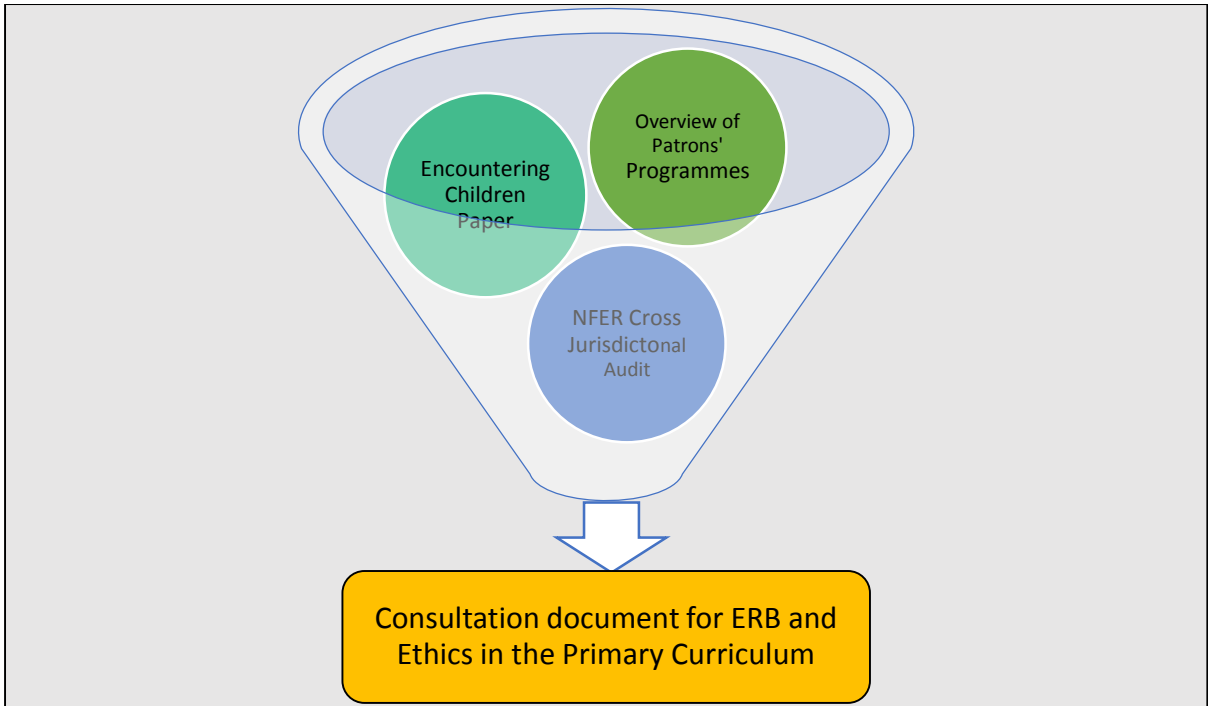
There is variation in provision for **Education about Religions and Beliefs** across programmes, particularly between denominational and multi-denominational patrons. It is noticeable that teaching about religions and beliefs in denominational programmes occurs later in primary school (if at all), tends to be from a faith-based perspective and is generally confined to the three monotheist faiths of

Christianity, Judaism and Islam. On the other hand, teaching about religions and beliefs in multi-denominational programmes tends to occur throughout primary school and involves learning about many religions and beliefs. It is also evident that within the multi-denominational sector there are a variety of approaches to teaching about religions and beliefs. These range from a fact-based approach with discrete learning areas, to a multi-belief approach with a more integrated method of teaching about religions and beliefs.

In relation to **Ethics Education** there is a clear distinction in relation to the epistemological approach supported by denominational and multi-denominational patrons. Denominational programmes support the teaching of ethics from a faith-based perspective. Multi-denominational programmes attempt to provide ethics education without promoting one faith perspective over another. Teaching ethics from a faith-based perspective presents significant concerns for children who are not of that faith. It is difficult to see how this approach can contribute to a national curriculum in ERB and Ethics. There is great variation in the multi-denominational approach to ethics education. The rights-based approach promotes critical knowledge in and understanding of human rights, while also promoting a pro-active approach to living in a democratic society. The Socratic approach promotes the search for truth and meaning through deep thinking about ethical issues that arise when living in a diverse society. The pluralist approach promotes children's engagement with ethical issues from their perspective, while considering the perspectives of others. The three approaches, while each having their strengths and weaknesses, may have much to offer a national curriculum for ethics.

This paper is one of three background papers prepared to inform and support the ideas for consultation, as illustrated in Figure 16 below. The consultation will welcome participation and contributions from educational partners, teachers, parents and the wider public. The findings of the consultation will be published online and will help to inform the development of a curriculum for ERB and Ethics.

Figure 16: Overview of background material for develop of a consultation document for ERB and Ethics in the primary curriculum



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The Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, ODIHR (2007). Toledo Guiding Principles on teaching about Religions and Beliefs in Public Schools. Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe, Warsaw.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Reference list provided by Patron's contact person

Catholic patron:

(Draft) Catholic Preschool and Primary Religious Education Curriculum for Ireland 2014

Veritas Publications:

- Alive-O Primary 1-Teacher's Books
- Alive-O Primary 2-Teacher's Books
- Alive-O Primary 3-Teacher's Books
- Alive-O Primary 4-Teacher's Books
- Alive-O Primary 5-Teacher's Books
- Alive-O Primary 6-Teacher's Books
- Alive-O Primary 7-Teacher's Books
- Alive-O Primary 8-Teacher's Books

Veritas Video Productions:

- Alive-O Primary 3 DVD
- Alive-O Primary 4 DVD
- Alive-O Primary 5 DVD
- Alive-O Primary 6 DVD
- Alive-O Primary 7 DVD
- Alive-O Primary 8 DVD

Church of Ireland patron:

Board of Education of the General Synod of the Church of Ireland:

Teacher books:

- Follow Me Series, On Our Way! Infants-Teacher's Book

- Follow Me Series, Moving On! First and Second Class-Teacher’s Book
- Follow Me Series, On-line! Third and Fourth Class-Teacher’s Book
- Follow Me Series, Working Out! Fifth and Sixth Class-Teacher’s Book
- Follow Me Series, Fit for Life! Fifth and Sixth Class

Pupil books:

- Follow Me Series, On Our Way! Infants
- Follow Me Series, Here we go! Infants
- Follow Me Series, Moving On! First and Second Class
- Follow Me Series, Stepping Out! First and Second Class
- Follow Me Series, On-line! Third and Fourth Class
- Follow Me Series, Log-on! Third and Fourth Class

Educate Together:

Educate Together Publications:

- Learn Together-An ethical education curriculum for Educate Together schools

Community National Schools:

- Access to www.gmgv.ie , this site includes guiding principles, GMGY lessons and presentations, teacher and parent overviews and additional resources for schools.

Muslim Schools:

- Islamic Foundation of Ireland:
- Islamic Religious Education for Primary Level Book 1
- Islamic Religious Education for Primary Level Book 2
- Islamic Religious Education for Primary Level Book 3
- Islamic Religious Education for Primary Level Book 4
- Islamic Religious Education for Primary Level Book 5
- Islamic Religious Education for Primary Level Book 6

- Islamic Religious Education for Primary Level Book 7
- Islamic Religious Education for Primary Level Book 8

John Scottus School Trust:

- John Scottus Junior School Prospectus
- John Scottus School Philosophical Programme Yearly Plan

Jewish School:

- XXXX School Handbook 2014-2015

Appendix 2: Overview tool

Patron's Programme Overview: Education about Religions and Beliefs (ERB) and Ethics				
Name of Patron:		Start date of review:		
Name of Programme:		End date of review:		
School type:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Denominational • Inter-denominational • Multi-denominational 			
Underpinning principles of the programme:				
Concepts, skills and dispositions promoted through the programme:				
Examples of ERB and Ethics:				
Class	Strand	Unit/Lesson	Page no./paragraph	Additional comments or quotations
Additional Information:				