

The *Follow Me* Religious Education programme

The Religious Education programme *Follow Me* was developed by the Church of Ireland together with the Methodist and Presbyterian Boards of Education. It is constructed using the same framework of strand units found in the rest of the curriculum and can facilitate the integration of Religious Education with other curricular areas within the day to day life of the school.

The aims of the *Follow Me* 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;

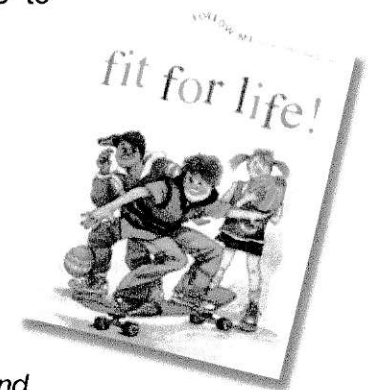
to explore the biblical witness to God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit;

to develop their own religious beliefs, values and practices through a process of personal search and discovery;

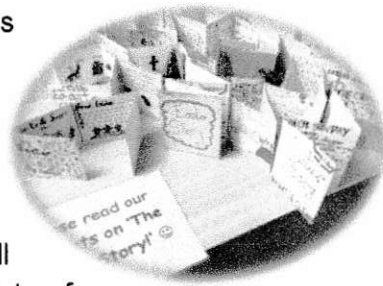
to develop an awareness of and a sensitivity towards those of other faiths and none.

There are seven strands in the *Follow Me* programme:

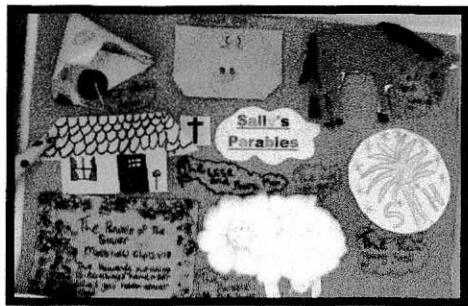
1. Celebrations, festivals, ceremonies and customs
2. Sacred writings, stories and key figures
3. Beliefs
4. Sacred places, worship and symbols
5. Moral values and attitudes
6. Personal Search – The natural world, relationships and moral values, ultimate questions
7. Awareness of those of other faiths and none



Follow Me employs a spiral approach, where the child revisits stories, concepts and religious questions throughout their school lives. The programme also links in with the seasons of the Church Year, covering the key festivals of Christmas, Easter and Pentecost and other seasonal topics such as Harvest. The programme is designed to be adaptable for all class situations and teachers may use a variety of teaching and learning methodologies to suit the needs of the class. There are pupils' textbooks and teachers' manuals for each class.

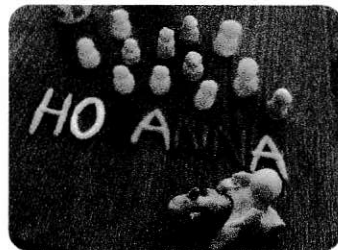


The central teaching method found in *Follow Me* is story and more than one story is included in each week's lesson. Many of these stories are Bible stories, read to the children in adapted versions in infant and junior classes and read by the pupils themselves in senior classes. The Bible is recognised as the word of God and is read in the light of the traditional understanding of it as interpreted by the Church, as well as with the benefit of contemporary knowledge and experience.



The programme also includes specially commissioned fiction and poetry. In engaging with Bible stories and other material, the teacher is bringing the children on a journey of discovery, beginning with what the children know themselves, their own life experiences; then exploring the stories and concepts with tools and skills that are developed over the years. The pupils are then encouraged to apply what they have learned in written work, oral discussion, art, drama, music or prayer. The options for creative responses are extensive. In senior classes

pupils keep a journal where they respond to the lessons and stories they encounter. These journals allow for growth in understanding and a personal response to topics and issues of faith.



As children progress through primary school they begin to reflect on the beliefs and faith of Christians. They are encouraged to consider ultimate questions and in senior classes, as part of the *Personal Search* strand of the programme, to reflect on some ethical and faith issues that may be relevant to them. An awareness of and a sensitivity towards those of other faiths and none is emphasised and is one of the four aims of the *Follow Me* programme.



Prayer is a key component of the Religious Education lesson, these prayers vary from formal prayers as may be heard in church, to class or individually composed prayers. Other aspects of the programme include music, church visits, visits of the parish clergy to the classroom and some exploration of church services and worship. Parish school links are encouraged and the *Follow Me* programme provides many opportunities for these links to be strengthened. Many schools have weekly whole school Assemblies using prayers, songs and stories. Many of these are found in the *Follow Me* programme and more are being developed to support class led assemblies.

When pupils leave sixth class it is hoped that they will have enjoyed Religious Education and that the activities, exploration and questioning that are so much part of the subject will increase their knowledge and understanding of the Christian faith.

