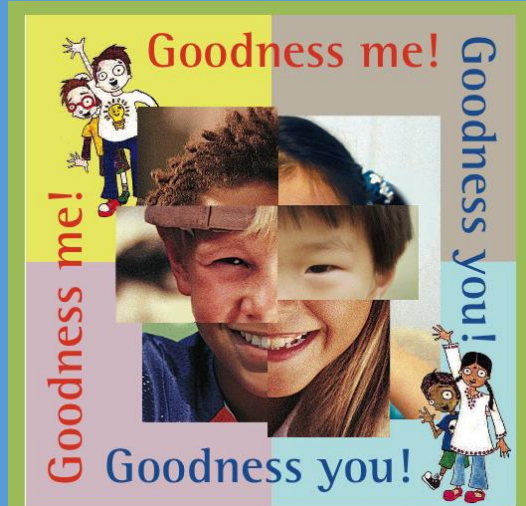


Goodness Me, Goodness You!



Frequently asked questions

Frequently asked questions about the multi-belief programme in the Community National Schools

What is the programme called?

The programme is called Goodness me! Goodness you! (GMGY). GMGY is commonly used as the acronym for the programme. This name reflects the child-centred focus of the programme pointing towards the sense of wonder and awe children intuitively have in relation to the world around them. The title also echoes the innate goodness within all children and the ease with which they form meaningful relationships with others.

In what sense is the programme child centred?

The programme is based on children's experience; experience of the relationships within which they live and grow. These relationships are with their own developing 'self', with others, most especially family, school and local communities. They are also experiences of their relationship with the world – spiritually, physically, culturally and ecologically. For many children following the programme, the experience of living, of self, other and world - has a further relational dimension – God/the Divine. Through being based on the children's experience of life, GMGY seeks to help children live and understand and flourish in their lives. Furthermore, the programme is story-based – stories which children love. In the Community National Schools (CNS) where the programme is currently being taught, the testimony of children, their parents and teachers is that the children are engaged and motivated by the child centred nature of the programme.

What is the aim of the GMGY programme?

The aim of GMGY is to nurture children in living their lives to the full in the light of their own faith/belief background. This aim sits comfortably with the overall aim of the 1999 Primary School Curriculum which aspires to facilitate children in living their lives to the full.

What principles underpin the GMGY programme?

The programme is based on a series of four guiding principles which honour all children, respect all beliefs and espouse all that is positive in multi-belief education. The guiding principles for GMGY are reproduced within the borders below.

- 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.
- Parents are the primary educators of their children, and families and communities are responsible for passing on traditions, values and faiths/beliefs.
- Respect for and celebration of the different faiths/beliefs of children is central to the ethos of a Community National School and this is mirrored in the GMGY programme and the facilitation of inter-faith/belief conversation.
- The GMGY programme is developed with school communities in an engagement process with all partners: children, teachers, parents, faith/belief leaders, educationalists.

For whom was GMGY written?

GMGY was written primarily for children attending the Community National Schools (CNS). It is also written for teachers and parents. Nurturing the beliefs of all children, in keeping with family faith/belief tradition, is clearly stated in the Minister for Education's statement, announcing the establishment of the Community National Schools (CNS) in 2007.

'In many of our new communities, however, there is a need for an additional choice that can accommodate the diverse preferences of parents for varying forms of religious education and faith formation during the school day, in a single school environment that includes and respects children of all religions and none.'

GMGY is the object of regular review in the light of experience gained in its delivery and consultation with the education partners. In recent times, the term *'faith formation'* has been replaced by the expression faith/belief nurturing. The term faith/belief reflects more accurately the inclusive nature of the programme. The use of the term *'nurture'* instead of *'formation'* captures the potential of the programme to contribute to the nourishing of the child's faith/belief appetite.

Is there a connection between GMGY and the ethos of the CNS?

Yes. The CNSs aspire to celebrate and nurture each child in a holistic manner. A child's faith/belief is part of who a child is and for this reason GMGY is seen as an integral part of the curriculum, taught within the school day. CNSs aspire to educate all children within the local community irrespective of differences of nationality, ability or faith/belief. GMGY not only recognises but celebrates and aims to nurture all faiths/beliefs. This is expressed clearly in the enrolment policy of the CNSs

'It is the policy of the CNS to respect, celebrate and recognise diversity in all areas of human life. Children attending a CNS will be taught and encouraged to view diversity as something which reflects the community from which the children are drawn. The school will endeavour to encourage the children committed to its care to have a pride in what makes them different and a belief that difference, when respected and valued, gives strength and vibrancy to the total school community and the wider community in which they live'

By whom was GMGY written?

GMGY was written by a number of authors, under the direction of the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA). The authors of GMGY are supported by various groups of teachers and management who work collaboratively in the production of the programme. The NCCA is a national body charged with responsibility for the development of curricula and assessment in schools. This process is carried out through curriculum development and consultation with a wide body of interested partners working collaboratively.

How much curriculum time is given to GMGY?

In line with the primary school curriculum, thirty minutes per day are devoted to GMGY. The term 'lesson' in the GMGY programme refers to a week's work – five teaching/learning periods.

How is the GMGY programme structured?

The programme is divided into a core dimension and a belief-specific dimension. The core dimension is taught for about 80% of the year and the remaining 20% of the year is usually devoted to faith/belief-specific teaching and learning.

How are the children grouped for the GMGY lessons?

During the core programme, children are taught in their class groups i.e. inclusive of all children whatever their faith/belief. For the faith/belief-specific lessons, children are grouped according to their faith/belief tradition. The number of groups and the faith/belief targeted in the groups is proactively managed in each school and reflects the composition of faiths/beliefs in the school and

the resources available to each school. The purpose of grouping the children according to their faith/belief traditions is to enable them to engage with the unique aspects of their faith/belief tradition.

How can children from many different belief backgrounds be nurtured in their belief by a common core dimension?

All beliefs have much in common. The stories on which the lessons are based portray values such as love, reconciliation, justice. The stories also portray experiences such as – working together, sharing food and celebrating events. These values and experiences are shared by all, irrespective of their faith/belief tradition. How a child perceives the realities portrayed in the stories will be influenced by her own faith/belief tradition. The potential of the core lessons to nurture children from different faith/belief backgrounds, be they secular tradition or religious faith tradition, is explained in an NCCA background document for the GMGY programme.

‘Every lesson in GMGY’s Core dimension explores a theme in such a way that it enables the faith or belief of the child, to flourish. It does this by building lessons around stories that can promote different interpretations and understandings. The child’s faith or belief can ‘come into play’ in any lesson as and when and how the child chooses or ‘is moved’, to do so?’

Parents, as the first educators of their children, particularly in matters of belief, are expected and enabled to play a role in nurturing their child as part of the GMGY programme.

What is the role of the parents in GMGY?

Parents have an important role to play in GMGY. This role is played by extending the child’s classroom experience of GMGY into the home and relating it to the family belief perspective. The parent also has a central role to play in nurturing the child’s faith/belief through establishing links to the family faith/belief community.

How are parents facilitated to play their role in extending the child’s classroom experience of GMGY into the home and relating it to the family belief perspective?

Each lesson has a Parent’s Lesson Outline. The outline can be downloaded by parents from the GMGY website. Each outline states the following:

- The contents of the week’s lesson;
- An explanation as to why the lesson was taught;
- The activities in which the child actively participated in the course of the week’s lesson;

- Suggestions as to what the parents could do with the child at home to relate the lesson contents to the family's belief tradition: be it secular or religious.

Who teaches the GMGY lessons?

The teachers employed in the school teach the lessons.

How are the teachers supported in delivering this programme?

Each lesson has a set of clear guidelines for the teacher. For each lesson the teacher is provided with the following:

- Introduction to each lesson and its place within the programme
- The thinking that underpins the lesson
- Aims of the lesson
- Learning outcomes
- Curriculum links
- Outline of components of a lesson

Through using these teacher friendly background notes, the teacher becomes aware of the relevance of the lesson to the life of the child and its relationship to the primary school curriculum.

Each CNS school has a GMGY coordinator who is experienced in teaching the programme and has access to a network of coordinators from the other CNS schools.

An induction course is provided to all teachers new to the programme.

Continuous professional development courses are provided to GMGY teachers

All teachers of GMGY have access to the teacher's section of the GMGY website. This contains useful background information on the programme.

Is there a GMGY text book?

No; the GMGY lessons are made available in electronic form. Each lesson is downloaded from a dedicated GMGY website and is delivered in the classroom by means of on an inter-active whiteboard. This method of delivery facilitates the ongoing process of adaptation and review of the programme according as it develops.

Is a complete programme of GMGY lessons for all primary classes available?

Lessons for all classes from junior infants to 2rd class inclusive have been completed and are currently being used in the CNS. Lessons for 3rd class are almost complete and work is underway on the programme content for 4th - 6th class. The lessons for 3rd and 4th class are being developed together in a spiral approach to curriculum development and the 5th and 6th class lessons are being developed in a similar manner.

How is each lesson structured?

The methodologies used in class seek to invite children into a variety of different learning engagements. Each lesson is based on a story. All stories are related to the child's experience of life and all of them are richly illustrated. The teacher then engages the children in conversation around the story. The purpose of the conversation is to give children the opportunity to explore the story and relate it to their experience of life and, when the child chooses, to the child's faith tradition. A key role of the teacher in these class conversations is to create a listening space underpinned by respect for all faiths/beliefs. It is the task of the parents to explore the lesson with the child in the context of the family faith/belief tradition.

Why, in the core dimension of the programme, are the aims and learning outcomes of the lessons shown in two different colour fonts?

An example of this practice is shown in the screen shot below taken from the teachers' guidelines on one of the lessons.

What am I trying to do?

- To explore with the children their experience of starting school.

Why?

- So that they may begin to feel safe and secure in being 'not at home', i.e. in school.
- So that where appropriate and with the help of their family, they may begin to associate their 'at home-ness' in school with God's love for them.

A black font is used to denote the potential learning outcomes for all children. A blue font is used to identify the potential learning outcomes relevant to children of a faith tradition. It is the child, and not the lesson, nor the teacher, who decides how the lesson will be interpreted. The blue and the black

fonts are also used in the parents' lesson outlines for the same purpose. In this way the lessons nurture the beliefs of children of all faiths and none while at the same time respecting their different faith/belief traditions.

'--- in the core dimensions of the programme lessons have two contexts which are different but it is the child, based on their home background who decides what the context is, not the lesson'

In addition to stories and conversation, what other learning engagements are used in the GMGY lessons?

Songs, poems and quiet time are a regular feature of the GMGY lessons. Children love to sing songs and recite simple poems. The songs and poems are especially composed for children and reflect the theme of the lesson. The practice of being still and reflective in quiet time introduces children to an important life skill. This latter practice is now widely used in the curriculum and in daily living.

Why does the GMGY programme have a faith/belief specific dimension?

Although all faiths/beliefs have much in common, each belief tradition has its distinctive elements. It is important that these differences are recognised, honoured and nurtured. The school shares this role with the family and the local faith community. The faith/belief specific lessons nurture the child in appreciating these distinctive elements and critical differences, whether it be sacred books, liturgy or key figures in the development of the faith/belief tradition.

Who teaches the belief specific lessons?

The belief specific lessons, like the lessons in the core programme, are taught by the teachers in the school.

Who writes the lessons for the belief specific dimension?

These lessons are written by the authors of the programme working under the direction of the NCCA. Where necessary, advice and observations are sought by the belief leaders from the relevant belief communities. Where appropriate, local faith/belief leaders and parents belonging to the faith/belief being taught can be invited to participate in the belief specific lessons, under the direction and guidance of the teacher.

Does the school have a role in relation to Christian children's' engagement with the sacraments?

Schools play a role in the rights of passage for its pupils. A welcoming ceremony helps the child to reflect on and experience fully her initiation into primary schooling. There is a graduation ceremony when children are leaving school.

Within the belief specific dimension, GMGY provides sacramental education¹, in response to demand from the parents. Preparation for the sacraments in a wider context is provided by the parents and the local belief communities. CNS facilitates communication between each of these partners in preparing the child for the sacraments.

How is GMGY linked to the primary school curriculum?

GMGY engages the child in learning. In common with other subjects within the primary school curriculum, in GMGY the teacher is the facilitator of learning and the child learns at his own pace and in his own way. It is rich in language-learning opportunities through providing a context for the child to reflect and narrate her own experience through listening to stories and reflecting and commenting on their content. Singing songs and reciting poems, relating to the themes of the lesson, further stimulate the child's imagination and enriches her linguistic competence. Given that there is a close overlap between the aims of the 1999 Primary School Curriculum and the GMGY programme, it is not surprising that there are few subjects in the curriculum that are not mirrored in and supported by the GMGY programme.

Where may I access further information on GMGY?

Further information on GMGY may be had by consulting the GMGY website at: www.gmgy.ie

¹ The term sacramental education is somewhat narrower than sacramental preparation. Sacramental education refers to the support of children's learning in relation to the sacraments. Sacramental preparation builds on this learning and relates it to the liturgy which forms the context for receiving the sacraments.



An Chomhairle Náisiúnta Curaclaim agus Measúnachta
National Council for Curriculum and Assessment

