

# **POLICY ON RELIGIOUS EDUCATION AND FAITH FORMATION**

## **Title/Area/Aspect**

Religious Education and Faith Formation.

## **Whole-School / Departmental / Subject Area**

Whole School.

## **Relationship to School / Ethos / Mission Statement / Aims of School**

### **Mission Statement**

The school aims to provide a caring and just environment where the professionalism of the staff and individuality of the student is recognised. The School needs to be a place where the student feels at ease, affirmed, accepted and listened to. This gives hope to the student and helps her to develop into an adult who is content and happy.

The school provides a grounding in the Catholic faith inspired by Christian values and standards.

The atmosphere of the school instils in the student a love of learning and discovery which leads to academic success, to the best of each student's ability. The Curriculum prepares the student for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life which involves education for employment, unemployment and leisure time.

A happy school community which includes staff and pupils achieves fulfilment for all.

Catholic Education values tolerance and inclusiveness within an increasing multicultural society. St. Mary's is a Catholic school supporting a Catholic ethos, based on universal values, which are formative for people of all faiths and is respectful traditions other than the Catholic tradition. The Religious Education (RE) syllabus is a state syllabus written to encompass all faiths.

The policy is rooted in the Mission Statement of the School. We endeavour to share and pass on an enlightened understanding of the faith, while fostering mutual respect and dignity.

### **Rationale for this School Policy**

Religious Education and Faith Formation reinforces our Mercy ethos. Students and teachers strive to act in a just and caring manner conscious of the Christian community, which is being built.

### **Goals of this Policy**

- (i) To ensure a growing awareness that Faith formation belongs to the whole school community, with teaching of the subject falling to the Religious Education Teachers.

- (ii) To encourage parents to take an interest in, and share responsibility for their child's spiritual growth.
- (iii) That students would have a sense of God in their lives.

### **Roles and responsibilities in developing and implementing this policy**

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| <b>1. Board of Management:</b>                               | To approve the policy<br>To ensure the policy is implemented.<br>To receive reports from the Principal.<br>To provide the necessary resources.   |
| <b>2. Principal/Deputy Principal/<br/>Senior Management:</b> | Monitor implementation of the policy.<br>Inform new staff  |
| <b>3. Staff:</b>   | To implement policy and to be aware that faith formation is not solely the preserve of the Religious Education class but happens in every area of school life.                           |
| <b>4. Parents:</b>   | To actively support school policy on R.E. and Faith formation.<br>To take responsibility for their own role in the faith formation of their children.                                    |
| <b>5. Students:</b>  | To be encouraged to be open to the Presence of God in their lives.<br>To attend R.E. classes and to participate in R.E. activities and faith formation programmes in a co-operative way. |

### **Content of Policy**

- The Religious Education department recognises that parents are the first teachers of their children. In a spirit of partnership R.E. teachers seek to support the family and build on the foundation of faith nurtured in the home.
- RE is a core subject on the school curriculum and is an integral part of the ethos of the school. All pupils are expected to participate in RE class and school activities. The RE syllabus is a positive step forward in promoting understanding of other faiths as well as the Christian faith.
- Religious education ensures that students are exposed to a large range of religious traditions and to non-religious interpretations of life. It has a particular role to play in the curriculum and in the promotion of tolerance and mutual understanding. It is not a 'free class' to do homework. There is allocated time on the timetable for RE and faith

formation, and students of other faiths are expected to use this time to study something relating to their own religious tradition, for example, a sacred text.

- Withdrawal of students from RE class can present the school with considerable logistical and supervision dilemmas. Therefore this needs to be negotiated with management and addressed during the enrolment meeting. However the school expects that all students will remain in and take part in R.E. classes. The onus is on parents to provide suitable alternative texts should they be required.
- In these cases, responsibility for supervision of the students at such times lies with the parents. This is because it is not possible for the school to provide such supervision from within the Department of Education's staff allocation to the school.
- R.E. is an integral part of the core curriculum of the school whether examined through the National System or not. It includes a catechetical dimension as well as formal instruction in religious knowledge.
- At present, the content of the curriculum follows the Junior Certificate Religious Education syllabus for first, second and third year students who are not being presented for state exams.
- Content of the Curriculum (See Appendix).
- A minimum allocation of two hours per week is give to teaching of religion in each class, where possible.
- A scheme of work is drawn up for each year group
- Assessment of religious knowledge is an integral part of R.E., facilitating continuity and progression. Students are actively engaged in R.E. and this is reflected in the modes and techniques of assessment.

#### **Management ensures:**

- that quality time is give to R.E. on the time-table.
- that the financial allocation to R.E. is comparable with other major curricular areas and that the specialised needs of R.E. are being answered by allocation of accommodation and other resources.
- That the school employs an adequate number of teachers who have the specialised qualifications to meet the needs of R.E. and Faith formation.

#### **Programmes within the school**

<b>Junior Cert.</b>	Non exam subject but we will be following Exam programme.
<b>Senior</b>	Non exam subject.

- Provision is made for the ongoing training and development of all involved in the delivery of Religious Education and Faith development.

- Regular liturgical, sacramental and prayer experiences are provided for students and staff.
- Opportunities are provided for families to attend annual Opening liturgy, Leaving Cert. Graduation Mass and the paraliturgies.
- Students are encouraged to develop their sense of social awareness and to work for justice and peace. They are led to an awareness of the plight of the poor especially in the 3<sup>rd</sup> world and are encouraged to help others through Concern, Trocaire, and other appeals.
- Retreat opportunities are provided for 1<sup>st</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> year students annually.
- Within the R.E. department there is a supportive spirit of collaboration between the specialist R.E. teachers, colleagues who teach one or more R.E. classes, the Pastoral Care team and the school chaplain.
- The school works in partnership with the priests and parish teams in a spirit of pastoral collaboration.

### **Performance Criteria**

- Time given to Religion
- Activities associated with Religion
- Involvement of Parents.

### **Person(s) / Group responsible for monitoring the implementation of this Policy**

Religious Education Department in conjunction with Principal and Deputy Principal.

### **CONTENT OF THE CURRICULUM**

#### **Junior Religion**

**1<sup>st</sup> year:** Community of Faith 2004/05

**2<sup>nd</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> years** Community of Hope and Community of Love to be introduced over the next two years.

#### **Senior Religion**

**4<sup>th</sup> year:** Personal Development Module by Kevin Kelly  
 Love of self – self esteem, confidence and talents.  
 Love of others – module on Caring for the Elderly.  
 Love of God – faith, prayer services.

Comparative Religions – Projects.  
Final Year liturgy celebrating ‘*Our Talents*’.

**5<sup>th</sup> year**

***Faith and Hope***

Faith: Jesus, Bible & Church

Choosing Life, Peace, Justice, Truth – Morality.

Hope for the Poor - Fundraising for St. Vincent de Paul, Chernobyl  
and Trocaire.

Hope for the Earth – Environment, pollution, recycling and  
stewardship.

**6<sup>th</sup> year**

***Love***

Relationships - self, family, friends, boyfriends.

Vocations in Life - single, marriage, religious.

Prayer - meditation, scripture, silence.

Graduation Mass.

***Junior Certificate Religious Education Syllabus (1998) – NCCA***  
***Guidelines for the Faith Formation of Catholic Students (1999) – Bishops conference.***

This syllabus is based on the following:-

- A. Communities of Faith  
(Gives basic information about the five world religions.)
- B. Foundations of Religion – Christianity.
- C. Foundations of Religion – Four world religions ...

Do two of A, B & C – If C, choose just one religion of the four..

However, an overlap is built into the programme - especially with Section A – all  
communities of faith in Ireland are discussed; or Judaism overlaps with B.

Do all of:-  
Section D - The Question of Faith  
Section E - The Celebration of Faith  
Section F - The Moral Challenge.

**Ratified by the Board of Management of St. Mary’s Secondary School  
September, 2006**

**Reviewed and amended by Board of Management      March 2011**

**The policy will be reviewed in March 2013**