



**Edmund Rice College,
Carrigaline,
Co. Cork**

Religious Education Policy

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SCOPE OF THE POLICY

As a Catholic school the Religious Education Policy impacts on the whole school community. Support for the implementation of the Policy comes from the following groups:

Board of Management: Approves the policy.

Principal and Deputy Principal: Support the procedures of the policy and ensure its effective implementation.

School Staff: Embraces and safeguards the ethos of the school and supports the cross culture nature of Religious Education.

Teachers of Religious Education: Implement and review the policy to ensure a high standard and effective delivery of Religious Education.

Pastoral Care Personnel: (Pastoral Care Team/Class Tutors/Year Heads/ Guidance Counsellors) Monitor the effects of the policy and provide support and guidance to students.

Parent(s) / Guardian(s): Support the ethos of the school, the Religious Education programme and facilitate the faith formation of their children.

Students: Participate in the Religious Education programme and related activities and to cultivate an openness to other religious traditions.

NATURE OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

As a Catholic school Religious Education is a core subject on the school curriculum, following the NCCA curriculum, and an integral part of the ethos of the school. Religious Education has nothing in common with indoctrination that amounts to teaching a student a religious way of behaving and believing or trying to 'convert' to Catholicism. This type of teaching deliberately harms students by undermining their natural ability to reason. In contrast, as a school we are committed to the deepest respect for both faith and reason as they contribute significantly to the formation of rational and mature citizens of democratic society.

Three types of learning in Religious Education are evident in our school.

1. 'Learning into religion' Students are provided with religious instruction and experience, such as prayer and sacramental participation that will help them to grow into their faith and in their understanding of the Catholic tradition.
2. 'Learning about religion' While particular focus is given to Christianity, students are exposed to a range of religious traditions and to the non-religious interpretation of life. Such a broad exposure seeks to develop in students, powers of tolerance and mutual understanding and the skills needed to engage in meaningful dialogue with those of other, or of no religious traditions.
3. 'Learning from religion' Students evaluate both what has been learned and how it has impacted on their lived commitments. Students are invited to learn from what they are discovering.

The Religious Education that the school provides is open to and inclusive of all students, of all faiths, and those of none.

AIMS OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

In Edmund Rice College, Religious Education endeavours to:

- Promote in each student a knowledge of his/her faith and its practice in everyday life; • Enable students to appreciate the life and mission of Christ;
- Contribute to the spiritual and moral development of the students;
- Foster an awareness that the human search for meaning is common to all peoples of all ages and all time;
- Explore how this search for meaning has found and continues to find, expression in religion;
- Identify how understandings of God, religious tradition, and in particular the Christian tradition, have contributed to the culture in which we live, and continue to have an impact on personal lifestyle, inter-personal relationships and relationships between individuals and their communities and contexts;
- Provide opportunities to deepen sacramental awareness and to participate in prayer and liturgy;
- Foster awareness of shared values such as justice, peace, the dignity of the human person;
- Promote right relationships with self, others, God and all of creation;
- Heighten awareness, empathy and compassion for local needs/issues and global problems;
- Appreciate the richness of the teachings and practices of the great religious traditions of the world and to understand the non-religious interpretation of life;
- Encourage peer - teaching where students of different faith traditions are invite to speak about their beliefs, sacred texts and rituals.

RATIONALE

The Religious Education policy allows us to reflect on what it means to be a Catholic school and to articulate our commitment to it.

CURRICULUM

Approximately two hours per week are devoted to Religious Education at both junior and senior level. JUNIOR LEVEL In 1st, 2nd and 3rd year the Junior Certificate Religious Education Syllabus is followed (Dept. of Education).

From 2019 the school will follow the NCCA subject specification for RE. The aims of Junior Cycle Religious Education are to:

- Provide students with a framework for encountering and engaging with the variety of religious traditions in Ireland and elsewhere.
- Promote an understanding and appreciation why people believe, as well as tolerance and respect for the values and beliefs' of all. The course consists of two parts:

Part 1 Students take at least two of the following with our school always teaching Section B:

SECTION A: Communities of Faith

SECTION B: Foundations of Religion – Christianity

SECTION C: Foundations of Religion – Major World Religions

Part 2 Students take all of the following:

SECTION D: The Question of Faith

SECTION E: The Celebration of Faith

SECTION: F The Moral Challenge Students complete a research project as set out by the Department in the format of Journal work.

TEXT BOOK A Question of Faith (3rd edition) by Lori Whelan and Niamh McDermott, published by EDCO.

TRANSITION YEAR

Although the programme for TY has yet to be formulated its broad aims are to:

- Promote an understanding of the Gospel of Jesus Christ;
- Heighten awareness of local needs and global problems;
- Explore the role of religion in Ireland today.

WITHDRAWAL FROM RELIGIOUS EDUCATION CLASSES

Edmund Rice College encourages full participation of mainstream students of all faiths, and of none, in RE class. It also respects and acknowledges the rights of parents who request their son or daughter to not undertake Religious Education in the school. The manner in which such a request is facilitated is related to available resources within the school and complies with the school's policies on curriculum, supervision and child safeguarding.

Three options that are provided for students when a request for an opt-out from Religious Education is made include:

1. Staying within the RE classroom following an educationally appropriate activity, for example, students of other faiths are required to use the time to study something relating to their own religious tradition, such as a sacred text. Humanist and nonbelieving students are required to read relevant literature, for example, Man's Search for Meaning by Viktor Frankl. Students will have to provide their own text which must be relevant and not be a text on the curriculum for other subjects in school. Students will not be allowed to study other subjects or complete homework during this time.
2. Parents remove their son/daughter from the school premises for the duration of Religious Education.
3. Parents provide supervision, within the school, for their son/daughter during Religious Education.

An appropriate procedure to facilitate a request for withdrawal from Religious Education is as follows:

1. A written notification from the parent/guardian to the principal.
2. The principal meets with the parent/guardian.
3. The principal explains the Religious Education policy and the three options the school can provide for the withdrawal of their son/daughter from Religious Education classes.
4. Parent/guardian confirms in writing the option they wish to exercise.

STAFFING

We consider Religious Education to be such an integral part of our school ethos and school community that it is imperative that we give it the status it deserves. That means looking at the appointment and selection of qualified teachers and its place on the school timetable and the allocation of class periods. All students are taught by teachers with specialist qualifications.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION CO-ORDINATOR

The role of the Religious Education co-ordinator is to:

- Establish and overlook the subject plan for each year group;
- Liaise with the principal regarding liturgical celebrations and retreats;
- Update and maintain sacred spaces and the meditation room;
- Remind teachers of the important liturgical celebrations, feast days and holy days;
- Organise regular meeting of the religion department;
- Notify those in the department of in-service days or CPD opportunities;
- Communicate with the diocesan advisor re school visits;
- Organise retreats and liturgical events;
- Implement and review the policy.

STAFF SUPPORT AND DEVELOPMENT

Effective Religious Education does not just happen spontaneously or accidentally. The very nature of the Religious Education class requires teachers of Religious Education to keep upskilling and enhancing their teaching skills and resources.

Therefore, it is important that:

- Management is supportive of all Religious Education both in and out of the classroom.
- Teachers with a qualification in Religious Education are timetabled to teach this subject.
- All Religious Education teachers are encouraged to attend in-service for Junior Cycle and Leaving Cert exams and the diocesan in-service.
- A budget is provided to support teaching and learning in this area.

Outside support is received from:

- Diocesan Advisor.
- The Edmund Rice Schools Trust
- Religious Education Support Service
- Diocesan Clergy

LITURGY

All staff and students are encouraged to participate in the liturgical life of the school. Students not of the Catholic faith are welcome to attend and participate, in as much as they can, in the liturgical life of the school. Observing liturgical celebrations is an opportunity for learning. However, if a parent/guardian requests their child not to participate in a specific event, then they should put this request in writing to the principal in advance. In such instances, the student will be supervised in the school.

To ensure that significant liturgical events are celebrated and recognised throughout the school year the following take place:

- Opening of the school year Mass
- November Remembrance Prayer for the dead involving the whole school community
- Services at Christmas and during Lent
- Ash Wednesday service
- Carol service
- Christian Unity Prayer
- Catholic School's Week
- Feast day of Blessed Edmund Rice

RELIGIOUS IMAGERY

Religious images and symbols are a part of our Catholic school and are reflected in our school crest. Images and symbols are also used during the school year such as the Bible, Christmas crib, Advent wreath etc.

JUSTICE AND PEACE

Justice and peace are an integral part of a Religious Education programme. Students are encouraged to empathise and show compassion for local and global justice issues by getting involved in supporting the work of agencies such as Trócaire, the shoe box appeal, supporting the work of the local Lions Club, supporting local charities etc.

RETREATS

Retreats are encouraged and promoted. The purpose of retreats is to: Provide a reflective space for students to deepen their understanding of the content of Religious Education programme by engaging in creative activities, group discussion, meditation and prayer. It is a time for them to consider the spiritual aspect of life in a communal setting. Students who do not participate in the retreat, attend school on the day.

PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

There is an opportunity for parents to be informed about the content of the Religious Education programme through:

- Enrolment meeting with parents
- Parent-Teacher meetings
- Open Evening information night.

Parents are involved in the Religious Education programme by their presence at:

- Opening year school Mass
- Other liturgical celebrations

DIOCESAN SUPPORT

The Diocesan Advisor visits the school to meet with school management and the religion teachers. The Diocesan Advisor provides:

- Update on diocesan and national programmes of events;
- Support by arranging CPD;
- Advise on policy and subject plans;
- Creative ideas for religion lessons, meditation and liturgical events;
- Ongoing support through phone and email.

POLICY MONITORING AND TIMEFRAME

This policy will be reviewed in November 2020.

Policy adopted by the Board of Management on 6 November 2018

Mr Pádraig Barrett Chair of the BOM