

Executive Summary.

- The policy is rooted in the idea that our school is a community whose values are gospel based. It sees every member of the school community having a role in implementing this policy while religion teachers have a more formal role. Section One (pages 1-2) of the Policy highlights this.
- Section Two (pages 3-5) focuses on our school's formal Religious Education Programme in terms of staff, Management, Curriculum, Facilities and Budget. It highlights the key principles by which the programme will operate within the school.
- A primary focus of Religious Education in this school is on faith formation through teaching in the classroom and a community experience of liturgical celebration. Religious Education in our school aims to challenge our students to live out religious values in their daily lives through reaching out to those in need while within school always being inclusive as a school community. Section three (pages 5-6) challenges all of us as professionals to ensure that our formal school structures respect these principles
- The Religious Education Department's aim is to ensure that the policy we have produced on paper becomes a lived reality for everyone in our school community on a daily basis. Section four (page 6) puts in place a monitoring system of review to ensure this happens.

This policy has been reviewed and amended with the addition of Appendices 1 & 2 by the Board of Management January 19th 2016.

Signed _____

**Peter Morrissey
Chairperson**

Date _____

RELIGION POLICY –

Section one

“Towards a policy on Religious Education in Presentation Secondary School Clonmel”

SCOPE of this policy

As a Presentation Secondary School under the Trusteeship of Ceist this religious education policy will impact on the whole school community. The scope will reach;

Board of Management

To approve the policy and ensure its implementation.

Principal and Deputy Principal

To support the procedures of the policy and ensure its effective implementation.

School Staff.

As teachers in a Presentation School under the trusteeship of Ceist, the hope is that the whole staff embraces and safeguards the ethos of the school and support the cross-curricular nature of Religious Education.

Teachers of Religious Education

To implement and review this policy on a regular basis along with ensuring a high standard and an effective delivery of Religious Education.

Chaplain.

To assist in the faith development of students. Our ideal is to have a full time chaplain.

Pastoral Care Personnel (Principal, Deputy Principal, Class Monitors, Pastoral Care Year Heads, Learning Support and Resource teachers, Special Needs Assistants, Coordinators and Guidance Counsellors)

To monitor the effects of the policy and to provide support and guidance to students.

Parents / Guardians.

To support the Religious Education programme in the school and facilitate the faith formation of their children.

Students.

To participate in the Religious Education programme and to cultivate an openness to other religious traditions

VISION FOR RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN OUR SCHOOL

Our School Mission Statement

Presentation Secondary School is committed to offering our students a holistic catholic education in a caring environment conducive to learning and personal development.

VISION of our Presentation School Community.

1. It is inspired by the vision of Nano Nagle.
2. Seeks to live by Gospel Values,
3. Recognises the dignity of each individual,
4. Has a special concern for the poor and under privileged;
5. Is challenged to develop a curriculum which promotes the harmonious growth of the whole person;
6. Contributes to the building of the local community;
7. Works for peace and justice in society.

Aims of Religious Education in our School Community

The vision of our Presentation School Community will be made a lived experience for everyone through;

1. Fostering an awareness that the human search for meaning is common to all people of all ages and at all times.
2. Exploring how this search for meaning has found, and continues to find, expression in religion.
3. Identifying how understandings of God, religious traditions and in particular the Christian tradition, have contributed to the culture in which we live, and how they continue to have an impact on personal lifestyle, inter-personal relationships, and relationships between individuals and their communities and contexts.
4. Appreciating the richness of religious traditions and to acknowledge the non religious interpretation of life.
5. Fostering tolerance of other faiths
6. Contributing to the spiritual and moral development of students..

RATIONALE for this policy

As a Presentation school under the trusteeship of Ceist we are committed to the importance of formal religious and moral education. This policy allows us the opportunity to reflect on, explore and articulate what it means to be a catholic school following Nano Nagle's tradition in third millennium Ireland. It is our hope and privilege to harness the religious development of our students of all faiths and none through their participation in religious education class.

GOALS of this Religious Education policy in our school ;

1. To ensure the status of RE in the school
2. To promote the religious and overall development of the students
3. To appreciate the richness of religious traditions and to provide a framework to encounter these traditions
4. To lead to a greater degree of clarity in respect of aims, procedures and roles of Religious Education in the school

SECTION TWO

Our School's Religious Education Programme

Staffing

Teachers

It is the stated policy of the Religious Education Department that all personnel where possible will hold a professional qualification in this subject. In terms of leadership in the Religious Education Department, the teachers work as a team and consensus is the method of decision making. We meet formally at least four times a year along with meeting informally during the year to discuss issues relevant to the Department. The formal meetings are facilitated by school management as part of our school planning and evaluation process.

The aim of these meetings is to;

1. To create a strong, fully briefed Religious Education team.
2. To engage in curriculum planning at Junior and Senior Level
3. Plan course work, review text books, discuss / share resources and any other issues relevant to the Department.
4. Ensure that significant Liturgical events are celebrated and recognised throughout the school year. Each year a significant number of the following liturgical events will be celebrated; Opening of the school year, Remembrance Service, Nano Nagle Day, Advent Prayer service, Carol Service, Christian Unity week, Ash Wednesday service, Lenten Reconciliation, Leaving Cert Graduation Mass, Morning Prayer / daily reflections, Class masses.
5. Provide a team approach to action for Justice Projects within the school.
6. Liaise with school management for fund raising for charity, organising retreats, pilgrimages, inviting in guest speakers etc.

Chaplain

St Mary's parish provides a priest who acts as a sacramental chaplain to the school.

The role of the chaplain is to;

1. Be available to staff, students and members of the school community.
2. To encourage school – parish links
3. To facilitate the implementation of the Liturgical Calendar and the celebration of sacramental life in the school.
4. To support the Religion Department.

Curriculum

All pupils are required to participate in religious education classes since ***our religious education programme is designed to be taught to all faiths and none.*** If there is an issue regarding participation it will be at the discretion of management. A parental request for the withdrawal of their child from Religious education class will only be considered if the parents / guardians agree to take an active role in the provision of supervision of their daughter during religious education class time. **See appendix 1**

Three class periods per week are devoted to religion at Junior and Senior level.

It is recommended at senior level that there would be an average of 20 pupils per class, that religion class would not be universally timetabled for last class on a Friday evening and timetabling for senior religion would be based on 8-10 week modules with a team teaching approach.

The Religious Education programme we use is the non exam syllabus with a focus on faith formation. A variety of up to date and relevant text books, articles, films and other media are used to communicate the programme to students.

Facilities

Prayer Room – Our school community’s sacred space

1. This room is currently being designed as a sacred space. It will contain contemporary images, symbols and texts from the Christian tradition since we are a catholic school. In keeping with the underlying principal of the room only activities that facilitate the ambience will be acceptable, e.g. meditation, prayer service, para- liturgies, mass and personal prayer.
2. Students and staff of any tradition are welcome to come and pray in this sacred space
3. The prayer room will be equipped with a data projector and sound system
4. A space in the school will be provided to file and store resources, filing cabinet, Press, shelves etc
5. An RE notice Board
6. Key moments in the Liturgical Year will be marked by the presence of symbols in the main foyer **See appendix 2**
7. The school will have a public notice board outside the gate which again will highlight key moments in the liturgical year

Budget

There is a reasonable budget provided for Religious Education in the school. The school helps to cover costs of retreats, speakers, resource books, class sets of magazines etc. The budget is allocated on a needs basis; if something is required for the Religious Education Department, then a case is made by them and normally there is a positive response.

Extra funding is made available to the Religious Education Department for once off purchases, e. g. TV, Data projector etc. The parents association is pro active in supporting once off subject demands.

Staff Support and Development

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

Given the Catholic ethos of the school religion has a high degree of visibility. Religious Education permeates and pervades the entire school community.

- Management is supportive of all Religious Education in and out of the classroom.

Teachers where possible with a qualification in Religious Education are timetabled to teach this Subject.

- Management will strive to achieve a balance of subjects in the religion teachers' timetables.
- All Religious Education teachers are encouraged to attend in-service.
- As with all Subject Departments in the school a budget is provided to support teaching and learning in this area such as, full membership of An Tobar, full membership of the Religion Teachers' Association, subscription to Gate Magazine, the cost of covering transport for retreats, the provision of general school resources to support religion teachers

Outside support is received from

1. Our Trustees: Ceist
2. An Tobar, Marino Institute of Education
3. Local Parishes
4. Diocesan Adviser

Section three

Faith Formation

It is important that teachers who work in our school participate actively in the liturgical and sacramental life of the school. Students who witness and experience the concrete involvement of adults in the liturgical and sacramental life of the school will share more readily in the life of the school. There is a need to promote Christian spirituality in our schools.

The liturgical year is marked in school by a number of events. The major liturgical seasons of Advent and Lent are marked by opportunities for:

1. Sacrament of Reconciliation, Mass, Carol Service, Para Liturgies
2. There is a sacred space in the main foyer that is decorated to reflect the changing liturgical year.
3. The Morning Prayer reflects the significance of the time of year, feast day etc. Teachers and students pause from their work to participate. Teachers and students are encouraged to contribute to the morning reflections.
4. The school is fortunate to have the services of a priest chaplain and there is an opportunity for pupils to have a class/year Mass.
5. At the beginning of each staff meeting there is a Reflection Service.
6. All staff are supportive of all religious events and staff are encouraged to participate in the liturgical life of the school.
7. Retreats are an essential part of the spiritual life of the school. The team see retreats as desirable for all years especially for exam classes. All year groups are obliged to participate in retreats organised by the school with the exception of 6th years who may choose whether to attend or not. Retreats are reviewed on an annual basis. Retreats are subsidised by the school e.g. Transport.
8. In the event of the sudden death of a staff R.E. team are responsible for co-ordinating such a prayer service.
9. In the event of a sudden death the school through its staff will provide ongoing support to students and staff in the aftermath of the funeral through the Religion Dept., School and Guidance Counsellors, Home School Liaison Teacher, Pastoral Care Team and other staff who may be willing to assist

Outreach Programmes

The students are involved in/with some of the following;

F.H.I.S.T., St. Luke's Friendship Club, Trickier, Self Help, Bothar, Senior Citizens, Chernobyl, St. Vincent de Paul, Faith Friends Programme in Transition Year, Social Work in T.Y. and L.C.A., Challenge to Change, Fair Trade, Peer Retreats

Parental and Parish Involvement

Parents are the primary educators of their children's faith. The school strives to support their child's faith development with the help of the parish. Parents are asked to support/attend/participate in school activities;

Advent Prayer Service, Remembrance Service, Reconciliation Service, Sixth Year Graduation Mass, Parish Clergy are supportive of liturgical events in the school

Inclusion

As a Catholic school we welcome students from all faith and none precisely because we are Catholic and are thus open to dialogue with others. As a Catholic school our aim is to foster the Christian values of truth, honesty, dialogue, justice, service to the poor and integrity. As stated in Presentation School's Admission Policy 'We admit pupils of other faiths on the understanding of the Catholic nature of the school and promote tolerance and understanding of other faiths.'

1. A genuinely Catholic ethos is based on universal values which are formative for people of all faiths, e.g. respect for humanity and the earth, a search for meaning, truth goodness, beauty, charity etc.
2. The Religious Education programme is inclusive of all faiths and none, in line with the Dept of Education Religious Education Syllabus.
3. No student is prevented from wearing a religious symbol. Any difficulty with uniform due to religious tradition will be resolved before the student is admitted, based on the D.E.S. recommendations.

Section Four Implementation

Success Criteria:

The real measure of success of this policy will be a positive experience of belonging to a school community that that is welcoming to all, where we treat each other justly and constantly seek ways of supporting those in need.

Monitoring and Review of Policy

- The Religious Education department will monitor policy implementation.
- Good communication between the Religious Education Department and School management.
- At the end of each year, the Religious Education department meet to evaluate the success of the policy implementation and present a report to the B.O.M.

Timeframe

This policy will come into effect on September 2009. It will be formally reviewed twice in the first year: December and April through RE Subject Planning Meetings. In subsequent years this will take place in April.

Appendix 1

Religious Education is a fundamental component of the curriculum in Presentation Secondary School. Religious Education is not concerned with indoctrination or teaching a person a religious way of behaving. It focuses on enabling students to speak the public language of religion; to comprehend and appreciate the place of religious and philosophical beliefs and practices in human life; to understand the need for dialogue among Christians; to develop powers of empathy for and sensitivity towards people of other religions and beliefs; to explore the beliefs and practices of other world religions and to foster awareness of shared values such as justice, peace, the dignity of the human person; to prepare students for living in community with other people of their own and other faith traditions and none.

In Presentation Secondary School, Religious Education, in line with other subjects, is allowed two hours, or a minimum of three class periods per week.

Presentation Secondary School respects and acknowledges the rights of parents who require that their daughter be excluded from Religious Education. The manner in which such an 'opt out' 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 we can provide for students when a request for 'opt out' from Religious Education is made include:

1. Staying within the classroom following an educationally appropriate activity.
2. Parents removing their daughter from the school premises for the duration of Religious Education
3. Parents provide supervision within the school for their daughter during Religious Education Classes.

Appendix 2

The following religious symbols may be displayed and used in the school during the school year.

- Bible
- Rosary Beads
- Hymn books
- Icons and Holy pictures
- Greeting cards, e.g. Baptism, Holy Communion, Confirmation
- Baptismal and Confirmation certificates
- Palm from Palm Sunday
- Communion wafers and grape juice
- Holy Water
- Holy Water Font
- Crosses
- Chalice, thurible, other items used in Liturgy
- Calendar showing the seasons and colours of the Church's year
- Christmas Crib, Advent Wreath, May Altar, other expressions relevant to Liturgical year.
- Symbols from other faiths as appropriate