

# **Revised Policy on Religious Education**



Coolmine Community School  
Scoil Phobail Chúil Mhín

**Ratified by Board of Management**

**9<sup>th</sup> February 2023**

## ***Section One***

### **Policy on Religious Education**

#### **1. Introduction**

The purpose of developing a policy within the whole school is to clarify the important status of Religious Education and ensure that it is supported by the school community. It is to ensure that all students experience a quality education in a changing world.

This policy is written in the context of the current legislation:

- Education Act 1998
- Education Welfare Act 2000
- Equal Status Act 2000 and 2004
- Education for persons with Special Educational Needs Act 2004
- Admissions to Schools Act 2018
- Circular Letter Circular No. 0013/2018 (Religious instruction and worship in certain second level schools in the context of Article 44.2.4 of the Constitution of Ireland and Section 30 of the Education Act 1998)
- Circular Letter Circular No. 0062/2018 (Clarification in respect of Section 5 of Circular 0013/2018 in relation to the NCCA Religious Education syllabus and religious instruction)
- Circular Letter Circular No. 0007/2020 (Change to Schools Admission Processes)

This policy is required in order to comply with the 1998 and 2000 Education Act – the spiritual, moral, social dimension of the students. It is also obliged to reflect later legislative documents and changing times in terms of curriculum and a wider scope of religious traditions.

According to the DESS Circular Letter No. 0013/2018, the agreements which formed the basis of the Deeds of Trust for Community Schools shall remain in place as follows:

***The religious worship attended by any pupil at the school and the religious instruction given to any pupil shall be in accordance with the rites, practice and teaching of the religious denomination to which the pupil belongs. If any question arises whether the religious worship conducted or the religious instruction given at the school is not in accordance with the rites, practice and teaching of a religious denomination that question shall be determined by the competent religious authority.***  
*(Extract from Deed of Trust)*

However, Article 44.2.4 of the Constitution of Ireland states:

***Legislation providing State aid for schools shall not discriminate between schools under the management of different religious denominations, nor be such as to affect prejudicially the right of any child to attend a school receiving public money without attending religious instruction at that school.***

The Admissions to Schools Act 2018 (61.1.c.(iv)) makes it imperative that those schools once regarded as faith schools now accept students from every religious background together with those of no professed religious background whatsoever. Nevertheless, this R.E. policy should adhere to the tone of Circular Letter No. 0062/2018 in that the Religious Education syllabus should respect the development of ‘students of all faiths and none’. In short, every effort will be made to allow students to experience as many different world religious traditions as possible without over-exposing them to one particular belief structure.

This policy has been drawn up by a working group of teachers as part of the School Planning Process. This should be considered as a working document to be reviewed every three years.

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 Principals**

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

**School Staff**

As teachers in Coolmine Community School, 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 the policy.

To ensure a high standard and effective delivery of Religious Education

**Chaplain**

To assist in the spiritual and faith development of students

**Pastoral Care Personnel (Class Caomhnoir / Guidance Counsellor)**

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

**Parents / Guardians**

To support the RE Programme in the school and facilitate the faith formation of their children.

**Students**

To participate in the RE Programme and to cultivate an openness to other religious traditions.

**2.1 School Prospectus**

This document should be read in conjunction with the School Prospectus that outlines the school policies under the following headings:

- The Mission Statement (working statement)
- Admissions Policy
- The Discipline Policy
- The Anti-bullying Policy
- The Alcohol & Substance Abuse Policy
- The RSE Policy
- The Strategy on Attendance and Punctuality
- The Guidance Policy
- The Information Technology Policy
- The Attendance Policy
- The Child Protection Policy
- Code of Behaviour Policy
- The Data Protection Policy
- The Intercultural Inclusion Policy
- The Internet Acceptable Usage Policy
- The Mobile Phone Policy
- The SEN Policy
- The SPHE Policy

## **2.2 School Mission Statement**

***‘We strive to create an atmosphere of mutual respect which promotes excellence in all aspects of school life and allows individuals to realise their full potential’.***

## **2.3 Our School Philosophy**

**“ A vision is the living out of shared values (Diggins, Doyle, Herron ’96)**

Our philosophy and vision is to deliver a programme, which will reflect and contribute to the objectives of the school, to the development of the student as a whole person and to the spirit of openness and tolerance, which the school already fosters.

To this end we endeavour to create an environment in our school where:

- Love, freedom, justice, sincerity and joy find expression
- All religious belief as detailed in the Deeds of Trust and Articles of Management, shall be respected
- The young people feel accepted and allowed to experience the exercise of appropriate responsibility.
- Sense of self is appreciated and fostered and differences are acknowledged and accepted.
- The potential of each individual, spiritual, intellectual, physical and emotional is recognised, respected, and the criterion of excellence applied.
- Special concern for the vulnerable and the underprivileged is experienced and encouraged.
- Positive self-assessment and reflection is developed.
- Staff, parents, students, past pupils and other relevant members of the wider community co-operate for the common good.
- Our motto Creideamh Beo (Living Faith) is nurtured. Values are explored and students are encouraged to live meaningful lives according to their values.

## **2.4 Aims of Religious Education**

- To contribute to the religious and spiritual development of our students.
- To develop a particular awareness of those in need.
- To promote co-operation between pupils, justice and fair play towards all,
- To nurture respect for the truth and a passion for the environment,
- To encourage a love for learning.
- To foster an awareness of the sacramental traditions.
- To encourage our students to ask and seek answers to important questions.

The NCCA has stated that the new Junior Certificate RE syllabus *‘focuses on developing knowledge, understanding, skills, and values to enable young people to come to an understanding of religion and its relevance to life, relationships society and the wider world’.*

## **2.5 Rationale for the Policy**

As a Community School 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 Community School. It is our hope and privilege to harness the religious development of our students and to provide opportunities for them to know their God

(understand and appreciate their religious heritage and that of others). We strive to be faithful to the founding intention of the Trustees and the implications of what it means to be a Christian School (Community School).

## **2.6 Objectives of the Policy**

- To ensure/safeguard the status of Religious Education in the school
- To promote the religious/spiritual and overall development of the students.
- To appreciate the richness of global religious traditions and to provide a framework to encounter/understand/appreciate these different traditions.
- To lead to a greater degree of clarity and respect of aims, procedures and roles for Religious Education in the school.

## **Section Two**

- **Staffing**

Religious Education is considered integral to the school ethos and school community. In this respect, Religious Education is given equal status to every other subject in terms of timetable, qualified staff, class allocations and recognition.

- **Curriculum and Resources**

The status of Religious Education in the school is reflected in the organisation of a set Religious Education programme at both Junior Cycle and Leaving Certificate level. The funding of resources may be a barometer of the priority 'in action'. The religious identity of a school is one that has evolved over time and is sustained by careful planning and the allocation of appropriate resources. In short is the level of resourcing for Religious Education on a par with that of other subjects? The school timetable is as much an expression of school culture and ethos as it is of school resources.

## **Attendance Policy**

***RE Policy : “ All Pupils will attend RE classes and occasions of worship except, in cases where in writing from parents/guardians the Principal has been notified to the contrary”***

It is school policy that all students should attend and participate in Religious Education unless notification is received to the contrary from a parent. A parent who wishes to withdraw their son/daughter from Religious Education classes for reasons of faith may outline their reasons in writing to the School Principal.

**It is recommended that the term ‘worship’ refers to the syllabus and an activity that takes place during daytime tuition.**

**Dublin Diocesan Guidelines: Community Schools in the Archdiocese of Dublin**

## **Organisation and Curriculum**

11(i) *In exercising its general control over the curriculum and conduct of the School the Board shall ensure that there is religious worship and religious instruction for the pupils in the School except for such pupils whose parents make a request in writing to the Principal that those pupils should be withdrawn from religious worship or religious instruction or both religious worship and religious instruction.*

11(ii) *The religious worship attended by any pupil at the School and the religious instruction given to any pupil shall be in accordance with the rites, practice and teaching of the religious denomination to which the pupil belongs. Religious instruction as aforesaid of the order of 2 hours shall be given to all pupils in the school (except those who are withdrawn from religious instruction in accordance with the provisions of the sub-clause (i) of this clause) in each week during which the school is in session.*

- **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 upgrading and enhancing their teaching skills and resources.

- **Faith Formation and the Liturgical Year**

It is an aim of the School Community to encourage the participation in the inclusive religious celebrations in the school. We adhere to the School's Mission Statement in that we support students in their whole and complete development.

A) The Liturgical seasons marked in the school year are Advent and Lent/Easter. These are marked by class by class prayer services. Also there is the commemoration of our deceased during November. As the school is multi-denominational Christian it is the Christian faith that takes primacy. To avoid discomfort and for convenience, decoration is limited to the Oratory and the RE Notice-board. The canteen is decorated for Christmas.

B) Each class visits the oratory at least once each academic year as a welcoming ceremony. As part of the Orientation Programme for 1<sup>st</sup> Years, a short religious welcoming ceremony takes place where a small group of the recent Graduation year welcome the students to the school. Sixth years also have a prayer service as part of their graduation in May.

C) Liturgical celebrations are primarily the responsibility of the Chaplain assisted by the RE Dept. Other members of staff are welcome to become involved and this is made very clear. In particular, we invite other staff to get involved in the Sixth year Graduation.

D) At present, retreats are only offered to 6<sup>th</sup> Year students in October and participation is voluntary. These retreats are usually held in Dalgan Park, Co. Meath and facilitated by the resident Retreat Team present there. Retreats are paid for by the students but lack of financial resources will not stand in the way of a student attending.

E) The school day begins with a thought for the day and the Our Father followed by notices just before 9.00 a.m. There is no public prayer at staff meetings.

F) There is a school plan to handle the death (sudden or otherwise) of a student or staff member. Responsibility for the prayer service lies primarily with the Chaplain assisted by the RE Dept.

- **Outreach Programmes**

The physical expression of the distinctiveness of a school and the importance given to Religious Education is nowhere more evident and obvious than in its visibility within

the school walls. Religious Education should always seek to be experiential through faith and action. The Community Care Team, with its fundraising and awareness raising of those in need, given tangible expression to the school motto 'Creideamh Beo'.

- **Parental and Parish Involvement**

Schools are most successful in achieving their religious goals when the school, home and parish mutually support each other.

- **Inclusion**

How we respond to international students of various faiths reflects our understanding of what it means to be a Christian/Community School.

## **Junior Certificate Religious Education (Exam)**

Religious Education for the Junior Certificate is an exam subject carrying the same level of importance as every other Junior Certificate subject. All students are required to sit the Religious Education exam in the Junior Certificate. All students in 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Years are timetabled for 3 class periods per week for RE in line with other core subjects such as History and Geography.

### **Aim of Junior Certificate Programme**

Religious Education aims to develop knowledge, understanding, skills, attitudes and values to enable young people to come to an understanding of religion and its relevance to life, relationships, society and the wider world. It aims to develop the students' ability to examine questions of meaning, purpose and relationships, to help students understand, respect and appreciate people's expression of beliefs, and to facilitate dialogue and reflection on the diversity of beliefs and values that inform responsible decision-making and ways of living. (*DESS Junior Cycle Religious Education Syllabus*).

***Junior Certificate Religious Education Syllabus outlined in Appendix 1.***

### **Assessment:**

Assessment is an integral part of the education process. Assessment offers opportunities for the evaluation of curriculum and of students' progress and to reward student achievements. The assessment of Religious Education for the purposes of the Junior Cycle Profile of Achievement (JCPA) will comprise two Classroom-Based Assessments, A person of commitment and The human search for meaning, and a final examination. In addition, students complete a written Assessment Task related to the second Classroom-Based Assessment, which is submitted to the State Examinations Commission for marking along with the final examination. (*DESS Junior Cycle Religious Education Syllabus*).

The new Junior Cycle programme is divided up into three strands:

Strand 1- Expressing Beliefs

Strand 2 – Exploring Beliefs

Strand 3 – Living our Values



## Transition Year Programme

With respect to RE, the TY Programme is divided into 2 separate semesters and 2 distinct groups. Each TYP group attends the RE class for 2 class periods per week for one semester only. The 1<sup>st</sup> group attends RE classes from September until Christmas. The 2<sup>nd</sup> group attends RE classes from January until the end of the academic year. This arrangement applies to a number of subjects on the TYP programme in order that students may participate in as a wide variety of subjects as possible. As a result, RE is accorded the same status as other core subjects on the TY programme and, in some cases, allocated even more class periods than some subjects.

Subject areas covered include:

- Basic Research Skills.
- An introduction to Social Justice
- Social Justice. Each student is expected to complete a Powerpoint presentation on a topic of his/her own choice once is related to some social justice issue. On occasions, students might opt for a Scripture based topic, depending on their own religious traditions. Upon completion, students asked to present their projects to the class.
- Relationship Issues.

Project assessment is twofold, 1) project content in terms of depth of research and accuracy and 2) the student's presentation skills.

## **Leaving Certificate Religious Education (non-exam)**

Students who do not choose Religious Education as an examination subject in senior cycle must attend the non-examination Religious Education class as it is a compulsory subject on the timetable. 5<sup>th</sup> years are timetabled for three class periods per week  
6<sup>th</sup> years are timetabled for two class periods per week.

**The syllabus consists of 13 distinct sections as follows:**

Over the 2-year senior cycle, students will be asked to explore the following topics:

- Why study RE/the relevance of RE for life's journey
- The Search for Meaning
- Spirituality/The Meaning of Self/The Value of Self
- Social Justice/Human Rights/Discrimination and Racism
- Morality/Moral issues
- Relationships
- Prayer
- Mental Health Issues
- Addiction Issues
- Homelessness
- Mindfulness/Wellbeing/Nature walks
- Strategies for dealing with Exam Stress
- Climate Justice/The ethics of caring for the Planet

The Leaving Cert syllabus is both flexible and adaptable to current social, moral, ethical and global issues as they arise.

Faith in Action is also an important component of this syllabus. A small number of students will volunteer to be part of the Community Care Team. Classes will be encouraged to participate in raising awareness about community and global issues. Some classes organise fund raising events for charitable causes. Assessment methods include class presentations, reflective essays and project work.

## Leaving Certificate Religious Education (exam)

Students who choose Religious Education as an examination subject in senior cycle must also attend the non-examination Religious Education class as it is compulsory. As an exam subject, RE is taken as an extra subject outside of the regular school timetable for those students interest.

**The syllabus consists of ten sections divided into three parts as follows:**

### **Part One**

This section is **obligatory** for all students.

**Section A:** The search for meaning and values.  
(20%)

### **Part Two**

Students must study **two** sections from the following:

**Section B:** Christianity: origins and contemporary expressions.  
**Section C:** World Religions.  
**Section D:** Moral decision-making.  
(40%)

### **Part Three**

Students must study **one** of the following for the final examination. The topic selected for examination must be different from those designated for coursework (Journal) each year.

**Section E:** Religion and gender.  
**Section F:** Issues of justice and peace.  
**Section G:** Worship, prayer and ritual.  
**Section H:** The Bible: literature and sacred text.  
**Section I:** Religion: the Irish experience.  
**Section J:** Religion and science.  
(20%)

### **Coursework (Journal)**

Two sections from Sections E, F, G, H, I and J are designated for coursework each year. Students must complete the coursework component of the examination.  
(20%)

### **Why choose Religious Education as an exam option for Leaving Certificate?**

Religious Education in the Leaving certificate follows a natural progression from the Junior certificate programme. If you are a student interested in exploring issues such as meaning and value, the nature of morality, the development and diversity of belief, the principles of a just society and the implications of scientific progress, then this course is for you. It will give students the opportunity to pursue further education in Religious studies/Theology and lead to work in a variety of different roles in every employment sector, ranging from teaching positions in schools and colleges, positions in a variety of public and private sector organisations and also in local and national government agencies. Typical roles for graduates include: Teacher; Lecturer; Broadcast journalist; Information scientist; Marketing and Sales; Law; Management; Social, Youth and Community work; Administration; Health and Childcare; Religious Vocation, etc.

## **Leaving Certificate Applied Religious Education**

**Rationale:** ‘This religious education syllabus seeks to support the holistic aims of education by promoting personal growth and facilitating spiritual development. It engages the students in the human search for meaning and offers them an opportunity to reflect, understand and interpret that experience in the light of our changing world. It invites students to examine religious stories, and where appropriate, their own religious story, and to value their place within it now and in the future. It exposes them to a broad range of religious traditions and encourages the promotion of mutual understanding and tolerance. It facilitates moral development through the application of a process of moral decision-making’.

**Module 1** Looking In

**Module 2** Our Religious Story

**Module 3** A Living Faith

**Module 4** World Religions

LCA RE is a subject where students get credits towards their LCA, two credits per module, two modules per year, four modules over two years, 8 credits in total. LCA total possible credits 200. It contributes to their final grade and as such is an important subject at senior cycle for LCA students.

## Section Three

### Success Criteria:

#### Policy Monitoring and Timeframe

Effective policy requires constant monitoring and evaluation to ensure successful implementation and to review what adjustments may be necessary from time to time. In order that the tasks of monitoring and evaluation are effective, consideration of the following may be helpful:

#### Monitoring and Review of Policy

- The Religious Education department will monitor policy implementation.
- It is essential that there is good communication between the Religious Education Department and School Management, and that time be given to allow necessary discussions to take place.
- At the end of each year, the Religious Education department will meet to evaluate the success of the policy implementation.

#### Timeframe

Apart from the usual on-going informal monitoring that would occur with every area of policy, formal monitoring would be appropriate at least twice in the first year and at least once during each subsequent year.

**This policy will come into effect on \_\_\_\_\_.**

**It will be reviewed after \_\_\_\_\_ year(s).**

## **Appendix 1**

### **Junior Certificate Religious Education Syllabus**

#### **Learning outcomes:**

Learning outcomes are statements that describe what knowledge, understanding, skills, attitudes and values students should be able to demonstrate having studied Religious Education in junior cycle. The learning outcomes set out in the following tables apply to all students. As set out here, the learning outcomes represent outcomes for students at the end of their three years of study. Therefore, the learning outcomes focused on at a point in time will not have been 'completed' but will continue to support the students' learning in Religious Education up to the end of junior cycle. The outcomes are numbered within each strand. The numbering is intended to support teacher planning in the first instance and does not imply that the outcomes should be followed sequentially. Many of the learning outcomes are inter-related across the strands and therefore a non-linear approach to planning is advised to enable linkages to be made across the learning. Junior Cycle Religious Education Expectations for students

#### **Strand 1: Expressing beliefs:**

Expressing beliefs develops students' ability to understand, respect and appreciate how people's beliefs have been expressed in the past and continue to be expressed today through lifestyle, culture, rites and rituals, community building, social action and ways of life. It enables students to appreciate that people live out of their different beliefs—religious or otherwise. It also focuses on understanding and appreciating that diversity exists within religions.

NOTE: The three elements of enquiry, exploration and reflection and action are incorporated across all the learning outcomes, to different degrees. Enquiry Exploration Reflection and Action

#### **Expressing Beliefs Learning outcomes:**

Students should be able to:

- 1) present the key religious beliefs of the five major world religions found in Ireland today
- 2) investigate two communities of faith that have a significant presence in their locality/region (the communities of faith chosen must be associated with two of the five major world religions studied in the specification.
- 3) engage with members of a faith community associated with one of the five major world religions studied in the specification and show an appreciation of how the religious beliefs of the community influence the day-to-day life of its members.
- 4) investigate how Christianity has contributed to Irish culture and heritage.
- 5) explore the presence of religious themes in contemporary culture through an examination of art, music, literature or film.
- 6) examine and appreciate how people give expression to religious belief in religious rituals, in formal places of worship and other sacred spaces
- 7) discuss the significance of non-religious rituals/celebrations for people's lives.
- 8) describe the role of prayer in the lives of people of faith.
- 9) explain what was involved in the development of a particular sacred text within a major world religion and consider its continued significance for the lives of believers.

- 10) discuss the importance of dialogue and interaction between major world religions and within major world religions in promoting peace and reconciliation in the world today.
- 11) research religious or other organisations, working at a national or international level to promote justice, peace and reconciliation and consider how their work is an expression of their founding vision.
- 12) synthesise and consider the insights gained about how people express and live out their beliefs, religious or otherwise.

## **Strand 2: Exploring questions:**

Exploring questions enables students to explore some of the questions of meaning, purpose and relationships that people wonder about and to discover how people with different religious beliefs and other interpretations of life respond to these questions. It focuses on students developing a set of knowledge, understanding, skills, attitudes and values that allows them to question, probe, interpret, analyse and reflect on these big questions, in dialogue with each other. NOTE: The three elements of enquiry, exploration and reflection and action are incorporated across all the learning outcomes, to different degrees.

### **.Exploring Questions Learning outcomes: Students should be able to:**

- 1) research artistic, architectural or archaeological evidence that shows ways in which people have searched for meaning and purpose in life.
- 2) consider responses from one major world religion and from a non-religious world-view to some big questions about the meaning of life, such as, Why are we here? How should we live? What happens when we die?
- 3) explore how different narratives/stories, religious and non-religious, express an understanding of creation/the natural world, and consider their meaning and relevance for today.
- 4) research and present the understanding of the Divine found in two major world religions drawing upon their origins in sacred texts and/or other sources of authority.
- 5) create a biography of a founder or early followers of a major world religion, using religious and historical sources of information.
- 6) construct a timeline of one major world religion, making reference to key people, times of expansion and times of challenge.
- 7) explore how the religious teachings of a major world religion address an issue of concern for the world today.
- 8) present stories of individuals or of groups in the history of two major world religions that have had a positive impact on the lives of people because of their commitment to living out their beliefs.
- 9) describe how the faith of a believer can change at different stages in life.
- 10) synthesise and consider the insights gained about how people with different religious beliefs and other interpretations of life respond to questions of meaning, purpose and relationships Junior Cycle Religious Education Expectations for students.

### **Strand 3: Living our values:**

Living our values focuses on enabling students to understand and reflect on the norms and values that underlie actions and to recognise how moral decision-making works in their own lives and in the lives of others, based on particular values and/or beliefs. It also enables students to engage in informed discussion about moral issues and respectfully communicate and explain opinions and beliefs. NOTE: The three elements of enquiry, exploration and reflection and action are incorporated across all the learning outcomes, to different degrees. Enquiry Exploration Reflection and Action

#### **Living Our Values Learning outcomes:**

Students should be able to:

- 1) examine different sources of values and ways in which the values of a person relate to their everyday life choices, their relationships, and their responsibilities to others.
- 2) reflect upon and discuss what it means to be moral, why people living in society need to be moral and what are the influences on and sources of authority for a person's moral decision-making.
- 3) examine a moral code in two of the five major world religions and discuss how each code could influence moral decision-making for believers.
- 4) investigate what living a morally good life means with reference to two major world religions and compare with a non-religious world view.
- 5) examine how a moral decision-making process can help a person decide what is right and wrong in an everyday life situation.
- 6) debate a moral issue that arises in their lives and consider the influences of two different viewpoints on the issue.
- 7) research the understanding of compassion, justice, peace and reconciliation found in two major world religions and ways in which these understandings can be seen in action.
- 8) explain how an understanding of care for the earth found in a major world religion promotes the wellbeing of all people and the planet and discuss its relevance for today.
- 9) synthesise and consider the insights gained about the norms, values and principles that inform decision-making and actions in the lives of people.