

Towards a Policy for Religious Education



Presentation Secondary School Listowel

Adopted by the Board of Management

Signed: _____

Chairperson of the Board of Management

Date: _____

2018

Review Date _____

*A school, as part of its mission of the Church, should always allow its policies, its priorities and purposes, to be illuminated, inspired, guided and challenged by the teaching of the gospel
(Sullivan, 2000)*

FRAMEWORK FOR A SCHOOL RE POLICY

Methodology

1. Initial review

Gather together the parties involved in developing the R.E. policy in your school. This can include catechists, teachers, management, parents, and the Trustees. The Trustees see this as a valuable opportunity to work in partnership with management and RE teams in safeguarding the charism of their schools.

Assess the current situation through discussion or brainstorming technique using the topics explored in this document. This could include exploring the current R.E. policy in the school, asking is it working and looking at its strengths and weaknesses. Explore the possibility of making changes to this policy.

If there is no established R.E. policy in the school consider the needs a policy should address.

2. Developing the policy

After gathering the views of all the interested parties a group, sub-group or individual takes on the responsibility of putting together a draft policy. The draft policy is then put forward for feedback and evaluation by the whole staff and the other partners in education (where applicable).

3. Ratification

The final draft is presented to the Board of Management for ratification.

4. Implementation

The policy is communicated to and implemented by all interested parties.

Section One

'Towards a Policy on Religious Education

SCOPE of the policy:

This religious education policy will impact on the whole school community.

Board of Management

The Board will approve the policy and ensure its implementation.

Principal and Deputy Principal

School Management support the procedures of the policy and ensure its effective implementation.

School Staff

As school staff, 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

RE Teachers will implement and review the policy.

RE Teachers will ensure a high standard and effective delivery of Religious Education.

Chaplain

The Chaplain will assist in the faith development of students.

Pastoral Care Personnel (Class Tutors / Guidance Counsellor)

Pastoral Care Personnel (Class Tutors / Guidance Counsellor) will monitor the effects of the policy and to provide support and guidance to the students.

Parents / Guardians

Parents / Guardians will support the RE Programme in the school and facilitate the faith formation of their children.

Students

Students will participate in the RE programme and to cultivate an openness to other religious traditions.

MISSION STATEMENT

Ours is a Presentation Secondary School, inspired by the vision of Nano Nagle, and in response to her we welcome and cherish girls irrespective of ability or background.

We aim to develop a vibrant community of Pupils, Staff, Parents, Management, based on Gospel values such as justice, truth and honesty, in accordance with the ethos of the school and our agreed Code of Discipline and conduct.

We aim to assist in the development of the full potential of each girl in a pleasant and safe environment, where the dignity of each member of the School community is recognised, affirmed and valued.

We aim to awaken our girls to their true dignity and role as women in present day society. Inspired by these values we dedicate ourselves to the continual development of our Presentation School.

VISION of School

Inspired by the vision of Nano Nagle the school will

- Seeks to live by Gospel values;
- Recognises the dignity of each individual;
- Has a special concern for the poor and under-privileged;
- Is challenged to develop a curriculum which promotes the harmonious growth of the whole person;
- Contributes to the building up of the local community;
- Works for peace and justice in society.

Aims of Religious Education:

- To contribute to the religious development of our students.
- To develop care for the weak, co-operation between pupils, justice and fair play towards all, respect for truth, a passion for the environment and a love for learning.
- To provide opportunities to deepen sacramental awareness.
- To encourage our students to ask and seek answers to important questions.

RATIONALE for the policy

As a Presentation Secondary 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 Presentation Secondary 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. We strive to be faithful to the founding intention of Nano Nagle and the implications of what it means to be a Catholic/Christian school.

GOALS or objectives of the policy

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

Section Two

CONTENT of the policy under the following headings:

- **Staffing**
- **Curriculum and Resources**
- **Staff Support and Development**
- **Faith Formation and the Liturgical Year**
- **Outreach Programmes**
- **Parental and Parish Involvement**

Staffing

We consider Religious Education to be such an integral part of our school ethos and school community then 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.

- a. What proportion of pupils are taught by teachers with specialist qualifications to teach religion and other teachers?

All students

Chloe Dalton B.A in Business Studies and Religious Education

Margaret Daly Maynooth Extra Mural Diploma in Religious Education

Lisa Whelan H.Dip in Religion Education Post Graduate

- b. Is there an R.E. co-ordinator in your school? Yes
- c. What chaplaincy services are available in your school? Sr. Eilis is our Chaplain and these are her roles:
- Keeps management informed of anything regarding Religious Education in the school.
 - Works as part of the Student Support Team.
 - To liaise with key staff: School Guidance Counsellor, H.S.C.L., S.C.P., Special Needs Coordinator, Year Heads & Management.
 - Co-ordinates regular Re. Dept. meetings (minimum of one meeting per school term).
 - To pass on information and resources to other members of the Re. Dept.
 - To bring a faith presence to the school community.
 - To provide support to both staff and students as the need arises.
 - To organise retreats and guest speakers.
 - To create school parish links.
 - To meet with parent(s)/guardian(s) on request.
- d. Do you have a 'Pastoral Assistant' i.e. a person, either paid or voluntary, who assists the R.E. staff and whole school in ethos related activities? Yes
- e. Do R.E. teachers meet as a department? Yes
- f. Do they occur often? Yes
- g. What are the aims of these meetings? To ensure a high standard and effective delivery of RE in the school
- h. Is there a practice of induction for new RE personnel? Yes

Curriculum and Resources

The status of Religious Education in a school is reflected in the organisation of a set RE programme at both Junior and Leaving Certificate level.

The funding of resources may be a barometer of the priority 'in action'. The religious identity of schools is not something that happens by accident. It is an identity 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 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. It is not a question of packing everything in but of establishing priorities.

a. How many class periods are devoted to R.E. weekly? (absolute minimum two hours per week.)

3 40 minute periods per week

b. Outline the programmes in use at Junior and Senior cycle.

Junior Level Syllabus :

Section A – Communities of Faith

Section B – Christianity

Section C – Major World Religions

Section D – Question of Faith

Section E – Question of Faith

Section F – Morality

Senior Level Syllabus:

The search for meaning

World Religions

Morality

Justice and Peace

Society and Responsibility

Relationship and Sexuality.

c. If you are not following the state programmes list the content of the programmes your school follows. N/A

d. What text books and reference books are frequently used in your school?

Question of Faith by Lori Whelan and Niamh McDermott – Junior Cycle

Religion for Living by Connie Duffy- Junior Cycle

Seek and Find by Katherina Broderick, Elaine Costello and Brendan O Regan.

e. What facilities and resources are available for the teaching of R.E in your school?

As a school community we have a comprehensive list of resources and facilities including a Prayer Room and strong links with local and neighbouring parishes. All resources can be found in the religion department plan.

- f. Is there a policy regarding pupils opting out of R.E. classes? Yes
- g. What possibilities for flexibility in curricular delivery are available for R.E.
e.g. block timetabling, team/modular teaching, improved Pupil-Teacher ratio?
Class groups can come together either as a year group or as a whole school
community to engage in religious services.

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.

No other subject on the curriculum, it could be argued, has the same degree of visibility in a school. Religious Education permeates and pervades the entire school community.

- a. In what practical ways are the R.E. department supported by management?
Diocesan Support headed by Tomas Kenny
Newsletters from CEIST and Presentation Order
- b. What Support Services exist outside the school for RE teachers?
e.g. Diocesan Advisors, RTA.
- c. What is the school policy with regard to attendance at in-services? In -
Service is very much encouraged and facilitated by management.
- d. What trustee supports are the school involved in? CEIST
- e. Is there a budget for R.E. in your school? Yes
- f. Is there a structured induction programme for newly qualified teachers of Religion? Yes

Faith Formation and the Liturgical Year

It is important that teachers who work in a 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 need to promote a Christian spirituality in our schools.

- a. What Liturgical seasons are marked in the school? How is the school decorated to highlight the Christian Liturgical seasons?

Advent – in the social area of the school we have an advent wreath that is lit each day during advent to remind students about preparing for the coming of Christ.

Christmas – the school is ornately decorated with lights, Christmas tree and a large Crib in the social area.

Lent – visitations to the Church for the Stations of the Cross

Easter- Poster display to heighten students awareness of the importance of Easter time.

Ordinary time – during the different seasons of the year the school mark many different occasions and celebrations such as Presentation Day, St. Bridget's day , St. Patrick's day, St. Blaise etc

- b. How frequently do class groups, year groups and the whole school, gather for assemblies/para-liturgy/liturgy?

On average the whole school gather for a liturgy or prayer service approximately once a month.

Class groups and year groups assemble during class times where meditation and prayer takes place

- c. What provision is made for Reconciliation services in the school community?

The sacrament of Reconciliation is offered in the school during the seasons of preparation – Advent and Lent

- d. What is the role of the whole school staff in Liturgical celebrations?

All members of staff embrace all Liturgical celebrations that occur during all times of the year. Some members of staff are Ministers of the Word, Ministers of the Eucharist and choir members who's help and support is greatly appreciated during these times of the year.

- e. What are the criteria for Retreats in the school? How are they funded?

Our school policy is that we will engage in an in school retreat for Junior years. Due to this accommodation we are making it acceptable to all students as a donation is all that is required.

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| f. | Is there a time for reflection/prayer at the beginning of staff meetings? Yes |
| g. | In the event of a sudden death of a student or staff member, do you have a
an appropriate prayer service or agreed response? Yes |

Outreach Programmes

The physical expression of the distinctiveness of a school and the importance given to religious education is no where more evident and obvious than in its visibility within the school walls. Religious Education should always seek to be experiential through faith in action.

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| a. | How and where is reflection on local and global problems encouraged?
e.g.: Developing World Immersion Programme, Gaisce Awards, and
local fundraisers, Green schools through climate justice, the SEAI 1
good idea competition, |
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Parental and Parish Involvement

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

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| a. | What opportunities are there to inform parents of the aims, objectives and content of R.E. programmes? E.g. PT meetings, Open Days, Information Sessions. |
| b. | How may parents be actively involved in the R.E. programme in your school e.g. group work, retreats, rainbows, guest speakers, charity events, carol service |
| c. | What opportunities exist to encourage Parish Clergy to link with the school? Ethos Co-Ordinator has strong links with the local Parish with regards to schools liturgies, perform the sacrament of reconciliation, carol service held in the local Church, celebration of Presentation Day in the local Church. |

Inclusion

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

a. Do you have a policy for the facilitation of students of different faiths who choose not to participate in RE classes? **Yes**

b. As a school, how do you encourage and support the religious and moral development of these students?

Theme weeks such as celebrating diversity, Presentation Secondary School prides itself on developing each student holistically and each teacher supports and encourages this in each classroom environment.

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

It is the decision of each school how the RE policy is both monitored and reviewed. The following are some suggestions:

- The RE department will monitor policy implementation.
- Good communication between the RE Department and school management.
- At the end of each year, the RE department 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.