



CLIFDEN COMMUNITY SCHOOL RELIGIOUS EDUCATION AND FAITH FORMATION POLICY

This Policy relates to Whole School and specifically the Religious Education department with the Chaplain and the Chaplaincy team (team comprises 6-8 students representing each year with Chaplain and RE teacher). This team has a specific role in the promotion of faith and a spiritual ethos.

School History:

The Community School in Clifden evolved out of two previous secondary schools, one for girls one for boys, run respectively by the Sisters of Mercy and the Franciscan Brothers. The Mercy Sisters is a Catholic order inspired by the beliefs of the founder Mother Catherine Mc Auley and Clifden Community School has a Christian ethos which places an emphasis on the practice of the Catholic religion through the practices of the mass and events marked on the liturgical calendar of the Church. The Franciscan Community lives according to the Gospel values and the life of St. Francis of Assisi. In Clifden Community School the spirit of community and care of the Earth is influenced by the Franciscan Community based locally.

The foundation stone of the current school building was laid on February 22nd 1974, and the school building was officially opened on May 17th 1979. Classes were held for the first time in this building in the 1976/1977 school year. The school operates under a form of management set out in the "Deed of Trust". The school is under the trusteeship of the Mercy and Franciscan orders and the GRETB.

Mission Statement

Our mission statement in Clifden Community School is to continue to provide a challenging educational environment in which all members of the school community irrespective of ability level or background can realise individual and collective potential in a caring environment which values and strives for quality and creativity in all that it offers.

We are committed to preparing our students for adult life by teaching Responsibility, Respect and Personal Regard for self and others under our banner of Lux, Pax, Felicitas- Light Peace and Happiness in an atmosphere that encourages positive self-esteem.

Clifden Community School is perceived as a community, with the student at its centre, where every effort is made to give practical expression to truth, freedom, justice, sincerity and joy. Relationships, structures and systems within the school are constantly evaluated against these core values.

Ethos

Clifden Community School is a Christian school supporting a Christian ethos, based on universal values, which are formative for people of all faiths and is respectful of traditions other than the Christian tradition. The Religious Education (RE) syllabus is a state syllabus written to encompass all faiths.

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 the student to develop into an adult who is content and happy.

The school provides grounding in Christian 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. Christian Education values tolerance and inclusiveness within an increasing multicultural society.

This 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 and Franciscan ethos. Students and teachers strive to act in a just and caring manner conscious of the Christian community, which is being built. The school is multi-denominational but the vast majority of our students are Catholic. In its ethos and programmes, the joint patron expects the school to operate on the basis of human and spiritual values that are grounded on sound principles:

- A commitment to maintaining a teaching and learning environment based on quality and the growth and development of the whole person
- A profound recognition of the dignity of each individual and the care of his/her spiritual and human development always seeking to cater for their real needs
- A school community made up of many individual parts including pupils, teachers, parents, staff and management where pupils may grow academically, physically, spiritually, socially and emotionally with a sense of morality and ethical responsibility
- A school environment where the individual student has a sense of being valued and respected by others for their own uniqueness and individual characteristics
- A school community which respects people and the world around us. A place which values the Earth and is willing to engage in issues around justice and ecology both in school and in the wider community.
- A commitment to peace and justice issues with particular sensitivity to the issues of the local area at any given time

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 the Divine in their lives and can be part of the school Chaplaincy team, wearing the Chaplaincy team badge

Roles and responsibilities in developing and implementing this policy

- 1. Board of Management:**
 - To approve the policy
 - To ensure the policy is implemented.
 - To receive reports from the Principal
 - To provide the necessary resources
- 2. Principal / Deputy Principal:** To monitor implementation of the policy
- 3. Staff:** 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
- 4. Parents:** To actively support school policy on RE and Faith Formation and to take responsibility for their own role in the faith formation of their children
- 5. Students, alongside the Chaplain and an RE teacher:** To be encouraged to be open to the Presence of the Divine in their lives. Part of this is to offer students the opportunity to be an active part of the Chaplaincy team on a term basis. This will involve students in faith programmes, retreats, visiting sick students in hospital or at home and sending get well cards and bereavement cards on behalf of the Chaplaincy team.

All students are encouraged to attend RE classes, to spend time in the Meditation / Prayer room, to participate in liturgical moments / 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, the RE teachers and the Chaplain, with the chaplaincy team, 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 and tolerance 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 and spiritual 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'.

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, RE 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 and Skill's staff allocation to the school.

RE 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 examinations.

Goals of Religious Education

- To contribute to the educational, moral, religious and spiritual development of our students
- To provide appropriate opportunities to assist and promote the spiritual needs of our students
- To develop an appreciation for truth and learning
- To encourage our students to seek understanding about the bigger questions in life and to think for themselves about the meaning of faith, religion and the overall purpose of their lives
- To inform our students through discussion / technology and experience about a variety of religious traditions as well as their own. Through this process students will be encouraged to respect different belief systems and decide how to make contact with the Divine in their own lives.
- To create an environment where the weak are respected and cared for and values such as compassion, justice and fair play are promoted and highlighted

Content of the Curriculum (See Appendix). A minimum allocation of two hours per week is given to the 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 RE, facilitating continuity and progression. Students are actively engaged in RE and this is reflected in the modes and techniques of assessment.

Management ensures:

- That quality time is given to RE on the time-table
- That the financial allocation to RE is comparable with other major curricular areas and that the specialised needs of RE are being answered by allocation of accommodation and other resources such as a chaplaincy room and a meditation / prayer room.
- That the school employs an adequate number of teachers who have the specialised qualifications to meet the needs of RE and Faith Formation
- That the “chaplaincy team” badge is recognised as one which carries moral and spiritual responsibilities and is worn with pride and respect

Programmes within the school

Junior Cycle: Non-examination subject but the examination programme is followed

Senior: Non- examination subject

Provision is made for the ongoing training and development of all involved in the delivery of Religious Education and Faith development. This might include attendance at RE in-service days, the chaplaincy conference, faith programmes and retreat days. Regular liturgical, sacramental and spiritual experiences are provided for students and staff. Opportunities are provided for families to attend the annual Opening Liturgy, the Leaving Certificate 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 Third World and are encouraged to help others through Concern, Trócaire, and other appeals.

Students are educated and informed about people who are vulnerable in our society and through workshops, such as Aidswest, the Samaritans, Jigsaw and LGBT, are brought to a caring non-judgemental attitude based on the Christian words and actions of Jesus.

Within the RE department there is a supportive spirit of collaboration between the specialist RE teachers, colleagues who teach one or more RE classes, the Pastoral Care team and the school chaplain with the chaplaincy team. The school works in partnership with the priests and parish teams in a spirit of pastoral collaboration.

Performance Criteria

- Time given to Religion and Spirituality
- Involvement of Parents
- Activities associated with Religion and Spirituality

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

Religious Education Department and the Chaplain in conjunction with the Principal and Deputy Principal

Appendix: CONTENT OF THE CURRICULUM

Junior Cycle Religion

Junior Certificate Religious Education Syllabus (1998) – NCCA

Guidelines for the Faith Formation of Catholic Students (1999) – Bishops conference

Basic text book:

Light the Way by Niall Boyle. This covers the three years of the Junior Cycle syllabus

1st Year

Communities of Faith

Foundations of Christianity

The Church Building and the Liturgical calendar

2nd Year

The Major World Religions

The Meaning of Religious Faith and Practices

Our own personal beliefs and rituals

3rd Year

Exploring prayer and spiritual practices

Understanding Sacramental Life of the Church

Liturgical year

Morality

Across all classes the students will cover specific themes depending on the time of year, including Catholic Schools week, the Saints, Mental Health Awareness, Parish Novena and the Way of the Cross and bereavement / loss.

Senior Cycle Religion

Basic Textbooks for Senior Cycle

The Inner Place by Tom Gunning

The Challenge of God by Niall Boyle

Time to journey by Claire Breen and Fiona Hedderman

Further Resources for Senior Cycle include:

- Stillness Speaks and A New Earth by Eckhart Tolle
- National Catholic Reporter - online
- The Deepak Chopra online site
- My World Survey 2012 - Minding Youth Mental Health
- Will There Be Faith - Thomas Groome
- The Elephant in the Church – Mary T. Malone
- Praying with Women Mystics - Mary T. Malone
- Darkness Before Dawn - Published by Soundstrue

Transition Year

The Search for Meaning-Philosophy and seeking understanding about the life we live and the reasons for our existence.

Personal Development Module by Donna Mc Guire (Chaplain) - Resources include Soul Collage and Mandala Creations.

Meditation Module - DA Powerpoints and *God of Surprises* by Gerry W Hughes SJ

Mindfulness - Sources: *Light Mind - Mindfulness for Daily Living* (Veritas,2009) by Padraig O'Morain; *Living Well with Pain and Illness - the mindful way to free yourself from suffering* (Sounds True, 2010) by Vidyamala Burch;

5th year

Self and my Relationship with the World

- Exploring the Christian Ideal of Friendship
- Developing a spiritual understanding of the World and looking at destructive forces such as alcohol abuse and greed
- Dangerous Cults - Scientology
- The story of the Buddha and its impact on Christianity and Mindfulness
- Time in Meditation Room for personal reflective practice
- Exploring prayer traditions such as the Rosary

6th year

WHO Am I

- Mental Health and Well-Being
- Suicide and depression
- Exploring Sexuality and my life Choices
- Vocations in Life - single, marriage, religious
- Prayer - meditation, scripture, silence
- Graduation Mass

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