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Religious Instruction

1 message

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To: Mary Kenny <marykenny@kwetb.ie>, KWETB Kildare Principals <kildareprincipals@kwetb.ie>, KWETB Wicklow Principals <wicklowprincipals@kwetb.ie>, KWETB Senior Management Team <smt@kwetb.ie>

All

The below are the current pieces of law/legislation pertaining to teaching of Religious Instruction. This might help you frame a policy for your school. This area will become difficult for you to manage and accordingly it is necessary to frame an up to date policy. I don't believe our current position in our schools is tenable even in schools that are deemed to be "Designated Colleges" operating under a Deed of Trust.

Could I ask that a group forms to draft such a policy and I ask that Mary Kenny act as convenor of this group. I would like to think that a policy would be ready for our next meeting.

RE: The right to withdraw from classes in religious instruction

Irish Constitution - Article 44.2.4 and Article 42.1

Article 44.2.4 – guarantees that children attending publicly-funded schools may not be compelled to attend religious instruction classes.

Article 42.1 - recognises the inalienable rights of parents to provide for their children's religious and moral education.

Education Act 1998 – Section 30

Section 30 (2)(e) – provides for a parent to withdraw their child from any subject being provided by a school, as part of the curriculum, that is contrary to the conscience of the parent or in the case of a student who has reached the age of 18 years, the student.

Non-Designated Community Colleges - Circular Letters 73/74 & 7/79

Circular Letter No 73/74 – Establishment of Boards of Management of Vocational Schools

Religion

10(a) '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the school except for such pupils whose parents make a request in writing to the Principal that those pupils should be withdrawn from religious worship and religious instruction.

10(b) 'The religious worship 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. At least 2 ½ hrs. Religious instruction shall be given to all the pupils in the school (except those who are withdrawn from religious instruction in accordance with the provisions of sub paragraph (a) above) in each week in which the school is in session.'

Circular Letter No 7/79 – Religious Instruction in Vocational Schools

1.2 '..... Vocational Education Committees should, therefore provide facilities for religious instruction Such arrangements would of course, be without prejudice to the rights of parents to request in writing that their children be withdrawn from classes in religious instruction.'

Designated Community Colleges – Deeds of Trust

In the case of Designated Community Colleges, **Section 10 of Circular Letter 73/74 entitled 'Religion' is built directly into the Deed of Trust.**

The Handbook for ETBs and Boards of Management of Schools and Community Colleges

The Handbook provides that the arrangements to be made by the Board of Management for the Religious Worship and Instruction in school, **shall be in accordance with DES Circular Letters 73/74 and 7/79 or as so amended.**

*** Schools are not obliged to supervise students outside of the Religion class or to provide another subject for the student as an alternative. Students that are over eighteen can legally opt out of Religion Class and supervise themselves outside the school if required.**

***Some schools may be refusing to allow students to withdraw from Religion class on the basis that the class is an educational experience as opposed to faith formation.**

Regards,

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Chief Executive

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