

Colaiste Lorcain

Introduction and Scope of this Policy:

This document sets out the policy of Colaiste Lorcain in respect of religious education and faith development for all students and to encourage all students to deepen their faith and to live out the values of their faith in their daily lives. While this is a multi denominational school, over 95% of our students are Roman Catholics.

Relationship to school's Mission / Vision / Aims:

Colaiste Lorcain's Mission Statement is as follows:

“Coláiste Lorcáin is committed to building on its own proud tradition of encouraging each individual to achieve his / her potential. As a school community of teachers, students and parents, we strive for excellence in everything we do”.

This Religious Education Policy is another important framework within which “the development of whole people, empowered to lead effective lives in the wider society” is enhanced in our school. The community of the school works in a holistic manner to ensure that dependence is gradually replaced by responsibility for self, society and the world. The dignity of each student, staff member and parent is honoured and reflected in school policies and structures, including this policy.

This policy is informed by the school's Mission Statement which commits us to preparing all students for the challenges of adolescent and adult life and to respecting the dignity, worth and individuality of every member of the school community.

Rationale:

This Religious Education Policy aims to ensure that appropriate procedures are in place to enable the school

- to offer a high standard of religious education to our students;
- to ensure that the religious education programme is suitable and appropriate to students of all faiths and none;
- to ensure that students have opportunities to explore liturgy and spirituality;
- to provide experiences of service to others to students;
- to provide for the religious needs identified, in as far as resources allocated to the school permit.

Goals:

The school shall have in place appropriate means and processes

- *to identify the religious education of all students;*
- *to review the religious education needs of current students and*
- *to seek to provide for the needs identified.*

Within the constraints of available resources, all students, who are admitted to the school, shall have access to, participate in and benefit from a religious education programme suitable to their needs. The school will endeavour to provide access for visiting personnel who are involved in the delivery of part of this religious education programme in the school building.

The aim of religious education is to provide students with a framework for encountering and engaging with the variety of religious traditions in Ireland and elsewhere. The syllabus invites the students to reflect on their own experiences. The students' own experience of religion and their commitment to a particular religious tradition, and/or to a continuing search for meaning, will therefore be encouraged and supported.

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Religious education seeks to promote an understanding and appreciation of why people believe, as well as tolerance and respect for the values and beliefs of all.

Some of the specific aims of religious education are:

- To foster an awareness that the human search for meaning is common to all peoples, of all ages and at all times
- To explore how this search for meaning has found, and continues to find, expression in religion
- To identify how understanding of God, religious traditions, and in particular the Christian tradition, have contributed to the culture in which we live, and continue to have an impact on personal life-style, inter-personal relationships and relationships between individuals and their communities and contexts
- To appreciate the richness of religious traditions and to acknowledge the non-religious interpretation of life
- To contribute to the spiritual and moral development of the student

Aims of Religious Education:

The “general aim of religious education is to awaken people to faith and to help them throughout this lives to deepen and strengthen that faith” (Religious Education Syllabus, 1982, pg. 4).

Curriculum:

The school currently teaches the N.C.C.A. devised (1999) Junior Cert. syllabus to the first three year groups. In following the programme the school will include the optional module on the Catholic sacraments. The R.E. programme is inclusive and contains modules on faiths other than Catholicism and world religions.

The school’s R.E. programmes are designed not just to impart information but also to contribute significantly to the spiritual development and formation of the student. The special needs of the learner inform how content is presented in all programmes.

The content of the school’s R.E. programmes at all levels includes:

- A focus on the spiritual development of the student
- Outreach programmes involving organisations such as Trocaire, St. Vincent de Paul, fundraising for worthwhile projects, etc
- An exploration of justice issues including practical local responses and
- Participation in liturgies such as class masses, prayer services, meditation, penitential services and the sacraments.

Allowing for the specific spiritual / faith issues unique to religion, religious education is treated as a subject with the same academic status as all others and is subject to normal school policy (e.g. homework policy, etc.) Like all subject departments in the school, the R.E. department has devised its own particular scheme of work for the school year for implementation by all teachers. This scheme is regularly reviewed and, where necessary, amended.

At Leaving Cert., level the classes are taught in single identifiable groups, largely based on mixed ability. While teaching a mixture of the state and the diocesan approved syllabus, teachers are not preparing students for the Leaving Certificate examination at the end of the two year cycle.

R.E. Department:

The school will provide adequate meeting time for the R.E. department to meet each term to plan the R.E. programme. All R.E. staff will attend such meetings and will be given an opportunity to contribute to the agenda of the meetings which will consider, inter alia, how successfully and effectively the various elements of this policy are implemented.

All teachers of religious education are fully qualified and committed to teaching R.E. The religious education co-ordinator convenes regular meetings) and ensures that the developmental needs of the subject are addressed by the teachers themselves and, where relevant, she refers matters to the school principal. She, also, provides written notes of all R.E. department meetings to the school principal.

In consultation with Kildare Wicklow E.T.B. and the Diocesan Advisor on R.E., the school will actively encourage and support the continuing professional development of R.E. teachers. All R.E. teachers will avail of such continuing professional development over time. The school will offer specific support when changes are introduced to the R.E. curriculum.

All teachers of religious education, like all other staff members, are encouraged and facilitated, where possible, to attend in service. This in service is provided by a range of bodies – the D.E.S., the Archdiocese of Dublin, etc. The Diocesan Advisor visits the school in an advisory and supportive capacity at least once during each school year.

The Principal, through the Principal's Report, will make regular reports to the Board of Management regarding the faith development programme and activities in the school. The R.E. department will liaise with the Diocesan Advisor.

Textbooks & Resources:

At Junior Cert., level, each year group uses a range of books / resources (See school Booklist).

These textbooks used are supplemented at the class teacher's discretion by the use of some or all of the following:

- World Religions and Beliefs
- The Challenge of God
- An Tobar
- Catechetical Resources from Galway Diocese
- Lifeways
- Resources from the Department of Health
- Newspapers and Magazine articles
- Religion Department resources
- Face Up Magazine
- Aware
- Grow
- Mental Health Pack from the Department of Health
- Prayerways
- Travellers Resource pack
- St. Vincent de Paul Resource Pack
- Living with Change and Loss: A Life Skills Programme

At Leaving Certificate level, there is no one single textbook in use.

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In addition to all of the above material, every classroom is equipped with a whiteboard, an overhead projector and an overhead projector screen. Unlimited photocopying is provided by the school. There is access to the use of a data projector by teachers. There are a number of tvs., videos and d.v.d. players, as well as stereo / sound systems, available at all times. Teachers are encouraged to bring classes to the computer room (if desired) where there is a personal computer available to each student.

Student Progress:

The progress of students will be assessed and reported through written school reports, Parent / Teacher meetings and display of students' work. Teachers will assess assignments in a manner designed to promote the personal and faith development of each student and will liaise with parents / guardians through the agreed school procedures.

Faith Formation Roles:

Parents / guardians have primary responsibility for the faith development of their children. The school supports parents by providing a high quality religious education programme for students. The local parishes, also, have a supportive role.

Parents / guardians will be advised by the school regarding the content of the R.E. programme in each year group. The school will liaise with parents / guardians regarding the school's faith development policy and will invite parents / guardians to participate in the school's programme in appropriate ways e.g. in the discussion and ratification of policy, the specific modules run by R.E. department as appropriate such as relationships, education, suicide prevention etc., and in school liturgies. The parishes will be invited to take part in the faith life of the school both formally and informally. In particular, the local priests / clergy will be invited to become involved in the sacramental life of the school.

Review of the R.E. Programme:

The R.E. Department will evaluate the success of the formal and informal R.E. programmes regularly – examining each year the suitability and effectiveness of the programmes for at least one year group. The school will provide time for such review.

Budget / Financial Matters:

The school does not currently have a policy of providing specific budgets for subject departments. However, when the need arises, the R.E. Subject Co-ordinator approaches the Principal and requests permission for specific items to be purchased. Usually, permission is granted and the money involved is taken out of the school's non-pay budget (provided by Kildare Wicklow E.TB.).

The Role of the School Chaplain:

Both in the activities of the religious education department and in the wider school community, the School Chaplain is an important person, who supports the work of the school and the holistic development of our students.

Liturgy:

A key element of religious education is the provision of opportunities for students to both prepare for and participate in liturgical celebrations. These celebrations normally involve some of the music

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classes in the school and are willingly supported by the music teacher in particular and by the school staff in general.

Typically, the school celebrates mass at the end of September annually to mark the opening of the new academic year.

Subject to the availability of local clergy, penitential services / services of reconciliation take place and are open to all students in both Advent and Lent. A Graduation Mass / Service for the relevant Leaving Certificate class is celebrated in late May / early June. As part of his work, the Chaplain may organise class masses for all groups of students. If necessary, liturgical events are arranged at key moments in the life of the school.

Gideon Bibles are distributed in September / October of each year to all of our first year students.

Students opting out of Religious Education:

Very few students (or their parents / guardians) request permission to absent themselves from religious education. The Board of Management has agreed to facilitate students who, for religious reasons, do not wish to partake in class, subject to the student and / or the student's parents / guardians making appropriate alternative supervisory arrangements with the school principal. In practice, the small number of students involved normally remains in the classrooms, but "study" their other subjects while religious education is taking place.

Role of Parents / Guardians:

The school is a supportive organisation in respect of the primary educators – parents / guardians. Our efforts to provide religious education, in its various forms, are most meaningful and effective when parents / guardians both understand and support our aims and activities. Open invitations are issued, through the regular school newsletter / principal's letter or through special and specific notices for parents / guardians to attend and participate in all of the school's liturgical celebrations. Also, parents / guardians speak to the R.E. teaching staff at the annual parent / teacher meetings for each student year group.

Review Procedures:

The policy will be reviewed regularly and by the full staff every four years. Any staff member who is unhappy with the content or the implementation of any school policy may request a review at any time and such a request will be dealt with as quickly as possible.

Adopted by Board of Management: February 2017

Review Date: February 2021