

Religious Education Policy



**Ardscoil Rís,
North Circular Road,
Limerick.**

**Ardscoil Rís is a Catholic School under the Trusteeship of the
Edmund Rice Schools Trust (E.R.S.T)**

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The Scope of the Policy

As a Christian Brothers/Edmund Rice Catholic School, this Religious Education Policy will impact on the whole school community. Support for and implementation of the Policy will come from a number of groups:

Board of Management:

To approve the Policy and ensure its implementation.

Principal and Deputy Principal:

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

School Staff:

In a Christian Brothers School, the hope is that the whole staff embraces and safeguards the Ethos of the school and supports 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 faith development of students.

Pastoral Care Personnel (Class Tutors/Year-Heads/Guidance Counsellors).

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

Parent(s)/Guardian(s):

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

Students:

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

Mission Statement and Rationale

The Religious Education Policy is informed by the Edmund Rice School Trust Mission Statement:

“To provide Catholic education in the Edmund Rice tradition”.

The Ardscoil Rís Mission Statement is:

“To promote the spiritual, personal, physical, cultural, aesthetic and academic development of its students. We aim to create a community where students are imbued with Christian values of respect, justice and integrity”.

We encourage students to become involved in a variety of activities outside of the curriculum. Life skills are reinforced through participation in such activities as the India Immersion Project, Social Placement, Edmund Rice Awards and Gaisce Awards.

The Rationale:

As an Edmund Rice school, we, at Ardscoil Rís are committed to the importance of both formal and informal religious and moral education. The characteristic spirit of the congregation of Christian Brothers is based on the vision of Edmund Rice which:

- Gives priority to education in a living faith whereby students grow to appreciate the life and mission of Jesus Christ with a view to being committed to the world as he was.
- Has a special concern for the poor and underprivileged.
- Is challenged to develop a curriculum which promotes the harmonious growth of the whole person.

Vision of an Edmund Rice School

Inspired by the vision of Edmund Rice, Ardscoil Rís seeks to:

- Nurture faith, Christian spirituality and Gospel-based values;
- Promote partnership in the school community;
- Excel in teaching and learning;
- Create a caring school community;
- Inspire transformation leadership.

Our Specific Aims at Ardscoil Rís:

The aims of Religious Education which plays an integral part in the curriculum and philosophy of Ardscoil Rís is to promote in each pupil a knowledge of their faith and its practice in everyday life, while adhering to the school ethos.

<i>Staffing</i>

Religious Education is an integral part of our school ethos and school community and it is imperative that it is given the status it deserves. The appointment of qualified teachers, the priority on the timetable and the allocation of three class periods to each group confirms this importance.

Virtually all our Religion teachers are trained Catechists, teaching both at Junior and Senior Cycle. In addition the school will support any teacher who wishes to gain further qualifications.

The Religious Education Co-ordinator is a rotating position among the qualified Catechists. The co-ordinator receives all information which arrives by post pertaining to Religious Education. He/She shares this information with Religion teachers and other staff members if relevant. The Co-ordinator in consultation with other Religion teachers recommends books to be placed on the booklists each year. The Co-ordinator is advised by the Principal of any other matters affecting Religious Education and will consult with the teachers of Religious Education before deciding on a response.

Meetings of the Religious Education Department are formalised so that all relevant teachers may communicate as a group on a weekly basis. The aims of these meetings will be to consistently review practice in the light of the Policy.

Curriculum

The Junior Cycle Religious Education Programme is a core subject at 1st, 2nd and 3rd year levels but is not an examination subject.

Transition Year students will follow a programme which has been formulated by the Religious Education department in conjunction with the Transition Year Co-ordinators.

The Senior Cycle Religious Education Programme is a core subject at 5th and 6th year, but is not an examination subject. It is school policy that Religious Education will not be timetabled during the first and last period of each day for 5th and 6th year students.

Religious Education as an exam subject is currently under review.

The textbook used at Junior Cycle is “Religion for living” by Connie Duffy, “Show us the way” and “A Time to Live”, from the Christian Way series. These books are used to help the pupil understand the truth of the Gospel and the challenge of living it. In conjunction with the textbooks, a variety of additional resources are used. Because of the evolving nature of Religious Education at Junior Cycle, textbooks are constantly being reviewed and upgraded.

No formal textbook is used in Transition Year but resource materials are provided by teachers and pupils. A modular system is in operation.

The textbook used at Senior Cycle is ‘The Challenge of God’.

Guest speakers are invited to the school to share their personal experiences on a variety of social topics, thus providing students understanding of their Christian education for students.

Class Periods:

At both Junior and Senior Cycle there are three class periods per week.

Facilities and Resources

A variety of resources can be availed of by teachers within the school. These include newspaper articles, magazines (The Gate, Face Up), photocopies, audio visual materials (D.V.D's, videos and appropriate I.T. sites).

Resources are stored in the Religion room and are available to relevant teachers. These resources are updated by the Religious Education Department on a continuous basis.

Every effort is made to allocate at least one class period per week in the prayer room. A variety of activities take place including prayer and reflection, liturgical services, meditation and experiential learning.

Religious Education classes are compulsory for all students and active participation is encouraged. Exclusion is only allowed with permission of the school management. We, at Ardscoil Rís, encourage students to participate in experiential learning through areas such as social awareness in Transition Year and the India Immersion Project. The students engage in a variety of charitable works, for example, St. Vincent de Paul Christmas Food Appeal, Bóthar, Concern Fast, Hospice Foundation, Goal and Trócaire.

Because of the Ethos of the school, we regard our staff as a major resource in the promotion of Religious Education.

Content and Assessment Techniques

Consistent with other subjects students are assessed regularly on an informal basis.

Communication

Activities and features pertinent to the Religious Education Programme are communicated to students twice yearly in the school newsletter, and through the school web-site, in classes and on the Religious Education notice board.

Budget

The Board of Management decides on the Religious Education Budget annually.

Chaplaincy Services

The Board of Management works positively to ensure chaplaincy services are available to the school

Retreats

It is school policy that retreats are encouraged and promoted. Retreats are supported by the Religious Education Programme in so far as they meet the needs of the students.

Prayer and Liturgy

Prayer:

Prayer is an integral part of Religious Education in the school. Each religion class begins with a short prayer. Similarly other meetings in the school commence with a prayer, for example, staff meetings.

Students are given the opportunity to actively participate in prayer, meditation and reflection. The school religion room provides an ideal setting for such forms of prayer.

Liturgy:

A variety of liturgical and para liturgical worship takes place throughout the year. Such occasions include:

- Opening of year masses for Junior and Senior students.
- Sacrament of Reconciliation.
- Class liturgies for the month of November.
- Advent services.
- Christmas Para Liturgy
- Lenten and Easter Liturgies – distribution of ashes etc.
- Edmund Rice Mass.
- Graduation Service.
- Prayer Room Liturgy
- Penitential Services throughout the year.

In exceptional circumstances such as bereavements pertaining to the school, Masses and prayer services are held. The importance of Liturgical events is promoted and the whole school/staff is invited to participate in such events.

The services are enhanced through signs and symbols and students' personal input. Christian signs and symbols are displayed throughout the school.

Parents

Parents are informed of the aims, objectives and content of Religious Education Programmes by means of:

- Participation by Religious Education teachers at the parent/teacher meetings
- Open Night presentations and meetings concerning the India Immersion preparation programme and encounter programme.

Social Awareness

Over the years, the school has had an amicable relationship with the local parish and community as well as surrounding parishes. As part of the Transition Year Social Placement Programme many of our students are actively involved with local community organisations, which promotes awareness of social justice amongst the student body.

The Social Placement Programme which takes place during Transition Year plays an important role in making students aware of the social problems that exist within the local community such as Thomond House, Milford Hospice, Focus Ireland.

Action Aid Programmes include the India Immersion Project which occurs bi-annually. Preparation for this Project is ongoing so that over a two year period, the students become aware of the social injustices and poverty that exist outside Ireland.

Students are actively involved in fundraising and other charitable works which benefits the under privileged in our own society.

Parish

The school is situated in the Holy Rosary Parish and as already mentioned, links with the parish are actively encouraged.

Students from other parishes, who attend the school, are encouraged to participate in their own parish action projects.

In-Service

Teachers are facilitated in order to attend meetings with Diocesan advisors, An Tobar support team and other related meetings as they arise.

Roles and Responsibilities

The development of the Religious Education Policy was undertaken by a task group drawn from the staff, Parents' Council, Management and members of the Board.

The Policy is implemented by the Religious Education team and the Religious Education Co-ordinator.

The monitoring and reviewing of the Religious Education Policy will be carried out by the Board of Management.

Support Systems

A system of support is in place in the school. This consists of the E.R.S.T, Board of Management, liaisons with the Marino Institute, the Diocesan advisors, school Chaplain and priests in the Parish.

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.

Monitoring and Review of Policy:

At the end of each year, the Religious Education Department meet to evaluate the success of the Policy implementation and will assist the Board in monitoring Policy implementation.

Timeframe:

Formal monitoring will occur once a year and informal monitoring will take place on an ongoing basis.

Board of Management Approved September 2010.

