

Meánscoil na mBráithre Críostaí, Cill Chainnigh

Christian Brothers Secondary School, Kilkenny.

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RELIGIOUS EDUCATION POLICY June 2017

School Name:	Christian Brothers Secondary School, Kilkenny
School Address:	James's Street, Kilkenny
School Details:	CBS Kilkenny is a Voluntary Roman Catholic Secondary School under the trusteeship and the patronage of the Edmund Rice Schools Trust. The school is grant aided by the Department of Education & Skills and is a single sex (boys) school.
School Management:	The Board of Management of CBS Kilkenny is a statutory Board appointed pursuant to the provisions of the Education Act 1998.

Mission Statement

Inspired by its founder, CBS Kilkenny aims to provide Catholic education in the Edmund Rice tradition. The school endeavours to be a caring Christian Community which promotes to the best of its ability the personal, spiritual, physical and intellectual development of its students.

Ethos

As an Edmund Rice School, CBS Kilkenny seeks to promote the five key elements of an Edmund Rice School as espoused by the ERST Charter:

- Nurturing faith, Christian spirituality and Gospel-based values
- Promoting partnership in the school community
- Excelling in teaching and learning
- Creating a caring school community
- Inspiring transformational leadership.

Introduction

Christian Brother's Kilkenny is a voluntary secondary school under the trusteeship of the Edmund Rice Schools Trust (ERST), for boys only. The policy is informed by the ERST Charter. The capacity of the school is approximately 682 students. Our policy is to enhance the educational growth of our students in their intellectual, spiritual, social, artistic, moral and sporting development. The policy is implemented within the context of our Mission Statement:

Policy on Religious Education in ERST Catholic Schools

Rationale for the policy

As an ERST Catholic 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 Christian Brothers / Edmund Rice 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 Edmund Rice and the implications of what it means to be a Catholic school in this Edmund Rice tradition in the third millennium Ireland.

Goals and objectives of the policy

- To provide positive experiences and opportunities for the growth of interpersonal relationships.
- To ensure the status of Religious Education (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.

Scope of the Policy

As an ERST Catholic School this RE policy will impact on the whole school community:

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.

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School Staff

- As teachers in an ERST catholic school, the aim is that the whole staff embrace and safeguard the ethos of the school and support the cross-curricular nature of RE.

Teachers of Religious Education

- To implement and review the policy
- To ensure a high standard and effective delivery of RE.

Chaplain

- To assist in the faith development of students
- To accompany and to befriend students on their journey through their school life
- To reflect and pray together.

Pastoral Care Personnel (Class Tutors/ Guidance Counsellor)

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

Parents/Guardians

- To support the RE Programme in the school and to facilitate the faith formation of their children.

Students

- To participate in the RE Programme and to cultivate an openness to other religious traditions and to enjoy the search for truth together.
- Students with special educational needs are catered for insofar as resources, supported by the Department of Education and Skills (DES) will allow.

Nature of Religious Education

As a Catholic school RE is a core subject on the school curriculum and an integral part of the ethos of the school. RE is provided for students in accordance with the doctrines, practices and traditions of the Catholic Church that derives its thrust and ultimate foundation from the person of Christ. RE has nothing in common with indoctrination that amounts to teaching a student a religious way of behaving and believing or trying to ‘convert’ to Catholicism. This type of teaching deliberately harms students by undermining their natural ability to reason. In contrast, as a school we are committed to the deepest respect for both faith and reason as they contribute significantly to the formation of rational and mature citizens of a democratic society.

Three types of learning in RE are evident in our school:

Learning into religion

Students are provided with religious instruction and experience, such as prayer and sacramental participation that will help them to grow into their faith and in their understanding of the Catholic tradition.

Learning about religion

While particular focus is given to Christianity, students are exposed to a broad range of religious traditions and to the non-religious interpretation of life. Such a broad exposure seeks to develop in students powers of tolerance, mutual understanding and the skills needed to engage in meaningful dialogue with those of other, or of no religious traditions.

Learning from Religion

Students evaluate both *what* has been learned and *how* it has impacted on their lived commitments. Students are invited to learn from what they are discovering.

The RE that the school provides is open to, and inclusive of, all students of all faiths and those of none.

Vision of an ERST Catholic School

Inspired by the vision of Edmund Rice, our school:

- 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 by working for peace and justice in society so that the school becomes a beacon of faith.

Aims of Religious Education:

- To foster good relationships between pupils themselves, between pupils and teachers, and the school community and God.
- To contribute to the religious development of our students.
- To develop care for the vulnerable, foster justice and fairness towards all, respect for truth, co-operation between pupils, 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; to come to know and to love Christ.

Staffing

We consider RE to be an integral part of our school ethos and school community. 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.

- Students are taught by teachers with specialist qualifications
- RE Coordinator
- Part-time chaplain
- There is no pastoral assistant.
- Term meetings of RE teachers as a department and as necessary in preparation for liturgies/events. Aim of the meetings is review RE policy and to plan for events.
- New RE staff are supported and briefed where necessary.

Curriculum and Resources

The status of RE in a school is reflected in the organisation of a set RE programme at both Junior Certificate (JC) and Leaving Certificate (LC) level. Three classes devoted to RE weekly for JC and LC (non-exam). Five classes devoted to Leaving Certificate RE Exam. 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, the level of resourcing for RE is on par with that of other subjects. The school timetable is as much

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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.

Staff Support and Development

Effective RE requires complex planning and organisation. The very nature of the RE class requires teachers 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. RE permeates and pervades the entire school community.

- Financial support for RE related activities.
- Chaplain part of TY school trip.
- Whole staff support for liturgies etc.
- Full school commitment and appreciation of the ethos, i.e. the quality of relationships within the school.
- Edmund Rice Camps
- Gaisce Awards
- Diocesan Day for Teachers of RE
- In-service training where applicable

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. We endeavour to promote a Christian spirituality in our schools.

Liturgical Year / School Year

- Opening mass – September
- November - Mass for the dead/Remembrance Service
- Advent /Carol service and First Year Christmas Mass (includes Parents)
- Lent - distribution of Ashes
- May 5th - Edmund Rice Feast Day
- Each individual year group has the opportunity to engage in faith formation throughout the liturgical year.
- Sudden Death: Crisis Team - Staff and Chaplain and Educational Psychologist
- All class pupils have the option of attending funeral of parent/ close relative of fellow pupil.
- Westcourt - available for reflection days with Chaplain.
- Zambia Immersion Project
- Catholic Schools Week
- Retreats – TY
- 6th Year Spiritual Walk/Climb

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- 3rd Year Exam Mass

Outreach Programmes

The physical expression of the distinctiveness of a school and the importance given to RE is nowhere more evident and obvious than in its visibility within the school walls. RE should always seek to be experiential, through faith in action and cross curricular. This is evident in the following programmes:

- Zambia Immersion Project
- Edmund Rice Awards
- Collections for various charities
- Volunteers for Lourdes
- Community Care Programme in TY
- Concern Fast
- 1:1 Computer Classes for elderly citizens
- Carol singing in local nursing home
- Young Social Innovators Programme with TYs
- Saint Vincent de Paul Hamper Appeal
- Lourdes Ossory Diocesan Pilgrimage
- A programme of Guest Speakers

Parental and Parish Involvement

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

- Parents' Council
- Parent -Teacher Meetings to include meeting with RE teachers of exam religion.
- Information meetings for TY parents - (emphasis on aims/goals of TY & CBS)
- Local Parish Priest - Chaplain.

Inclusion

As a school we strongly recommend that every student study RE as an exam subject at JC level. How we respond to students of various faiths reflects our understanding of what it means to be a Catholic, Edmund Rice School. However the school respects the rights of parents to request their son to be exempt from participation in RE classes. The manner in which such a withdrawal is facilitated is related to available resources within the school and complies with the school's policies on curriculum, supervision and child safeguarding.

Three options that are provided for students when an 'opt out' request from RE is made include:

1. Staying within the classroom, following an educationally appropriate activity, making sure to refrain from doing homework. For example, students of other faiths are required to use the time to study something relating to their own religious tradition, such as a sacred text. Humanist and non- believing students are required to read relevant literature, for example, *Man's Search for Meaning* by Viktor Frankl. A bank of reading material is available for students to choose from.
2. Parents remove their son from the school premises for the duration of RE.
3. Parents provide supervision within the school for their son during RE.

An appropriate procedure to facilitate a request for withdrawal from RE is as follows:

1. A written notification from the parents to the principal.
2. The principal meets with the parents.
3. The principal explains the RE policy and the three options the school can provide for the withdrawal of their son from RE classes.

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Policy Monitoring and Review

Effective policy requires 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, the following will be helpful:

- The RE department will monitor policy implementation.
- Good communication between the RE Department and school management.

Alongside on-going informal monitoring that would occur with every area of policy, formal monitoring is appropriate at least twice in the first year and at least once during each subsequent year.

Approval

This policy has been approved by the CBS Kilkenny Board of Management.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Chairperson, Board of Management