

**Policy for Religious Education in
Christian Brothers Secondary School Middleton
(Revised 2007)**

*A school, as part of its mission of the Church, should
always allow its policies, its priorities and purposes, to
be illuminated, inspired, guided and challenged by the
teaching of the gospel
(Sullivan, 2000)*

Section One

As a Christian Brothers Catholic School, this religious education policy will impact on the whole school community. The scope will reach:

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

As teachers 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 / Guidance Counsellor)

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

Parents / Guardians

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

Students

To participate in the RE programme and to cultivate an openness to other religious traditions.

Parishes and Communities

To include as far as possible the surrounding parishes and communities in the faith life of the school.

Mission Statement

“Our school aspires to being a caring Christian centre of learning, where the promotion of Irish culture, values of respect for self and others, honest endeavour and efforts to achieve full potential are nurtured”.

VISION of C.B.S. Midleton as a Christian Brothers 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 – spiritual, moral, intellectual, social, emotional and physical development.*
- *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.*

Ref: Religious & Educational Philosophy Statement of the Christian Brothers.

Aims of Religious Education:

- *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, consideration 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.*

RATIONALE for the policy

As a Christian Brothers 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 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 third millennium Ireland.

The GOALS or objectives of the policy

- To ensure the status of 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.*

Section Two

- **Staffing**
- **Curriculum and Resources**
- **Staff Support and Development**
- **Faith Formation and the Liturgical Year**
- **Outreach Programmes**
- **Parental and Parish Involvement**
- **Inclusion**

Staffing

We consider Religious Education to be such an integral part of our school ethos and school community that it is imperative that we give it a status on a par with other subjects. That means looking at the appointment and selection of qualified teachers and its place on the school timetable and the allocation of class periods.

Teachers with specialist qualifications in the teaching of Religious Education (four of total staff of thirty four)

Mr. Paul Kelly - B.A. Theology, Maynooth, M.A., H.D.E.

Miss Maura Smyth - B.A. Theology, Maynooth, M.A. in School Chaplaincy and Pastoral Care MDI ; H.D.E.

Mr. Denis Ring – M.A. in School Chaplaincy and Pastoral Care MDI; B.A., H.D.E.

Maureen O'Mahony B.A., H.D.E., H.D. in the Teaching of Religion, Post Grad. Dip. In Learning Support.

R.E. co-ordinator: Miss Maura Smyth

a. Chaplaincy services:

Fr. Jim Moore C.C. Saleen (visiting)

Mr. Denis Ring – M.A. in School Chaplaincy and Pastoral Care MDI.

Miss Maura Smyth - B.A. Theology, Maynooth, M.A. in School Chaplaincy and Pastoral Care MDI.

- b. Do you have a 'Pastoral Assistant' i.e. a person, either paid or voluntary, who assists the R.E. staff and whole school in ethos related activities?- No
- c. Do R.E. teachers meet as a department? Do they occur too often/not enough? What are the aims of these meetings? – R.E. teachers meet at the start of the year and from time to time to review the programme; also on occasions where a liturgy is required or where a crisis arises that concerns anyone/group in the school community. Meetings of R.E. teachers might well benefit from a better frequency and that is an aim for the future.
- d. Is there a practice of induction for new RE personnel? – No structured induction programme as such but any new R.E. teacher is supported with materials and any other needs s/he may have.

Curriculum and Resources

The status of Religious Education in a school is reflected in the organisation of a set RE programme at both Junior and Leaving Certificate level.

The funding of resources may be a barometer of the priority 'in action'. 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, is the level of resourcing for Religious Education on par with that of other subjects?

The school timetable is as much 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.

- a. Class periods devoted to R.E. weekly: Two classes of 42" each.
- b. R.E. programmes in use at Junior and Senior cycle:
The R.E. exam syllabus is taught to first year. It will be an option subject in second and third year with those students sitting the Junior Certificate Examination in R.E. If sufficient numbers apply, it is envisaged that R.E. will be taught in senior cycle to Leaving Certificate level. All classes from second year upwards will continue to have two non-exam R.E. classes per week including those who are taking the R.E. exam.

Non-exam R.E. syllabus:

The non-exam R.E. programme follows the guidelines as laid down by the Catholic hierarchy; standard text books are used in the junior school.

c. R.E Text books and reference books in use in the school: *A set of text books is maintained for each year group which teachers access from the teachers' resource room.*

d. Facilities and resources available for the teaching of R.E in the school:

The school subscribes to An Tobar.

There is a R.E. resource cabinet/library with a wide range of literature and resources.

The school has the use of the local Edmund Rice Pastoral Centre (formerly the Christian Brothers Community House). This includes a Prayer room/Oratory and a Retreat Centre.

e. Policy regarding pupils opting out of R.E. classes - *Pupils whose parents request that their sons do not receive instruction in Religious Education or who are non-Catholics or of no denomination are exempted from participation in R.E. classes but are required to stay in the room under teacher supervision.*

f. R.E. timetabling, team/modular teaching, improved Pupil-Teacher ratio:

All senior cycle R.E. banded i.e. the classes are co-timetabled. This is to allow a rotation of R.E. teachers through the different class groups usually on a three-week basis.

In Leaving Cert. years one and two the class groups are halved so that groups of c.12 students are taken by a R.E. teacher or chaplain in small group discussion format.

Staff Support and Development

Effective Religious Education does not just happen spontaneously or accidentally. The very nature of the Religious Education class requires teachers of Religious Education 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. Religious Education permeates and pervades the entire school community.

- a. In what practical ways are the R.E. department supported by management? – Resources requested by the R.E department are given favourable consideration.
- b. What Support Services exist outside the school for RE teachers?
An Tobar, Chaplains, Diocesan Advisors, RTA.
- c. What is the school policy with regard to attendance at in-services? R.E. teachers are encouraged and supported in attending inservice as in other subjects.
- d. What Edmund Rice initiatives or trustee supports are the school involved in? The Edmund Rice Awards; Services on 5th May
- e. Is there a budget for R.E. in your school? - Yes
- f. Is there a structured induction programme for newly qualified teachers of Religion? No structured programme as such but new teachers are supported and encouraged with resources and advice.

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. There is need to promote a Christian spirituality in our schools.

- a. What Liturgical seasons are marked in the school? How is the school decorated to highlight the Christian Liturgical seasons? A service is held at Christmas in which students participate – readings and music. Emblems reflecting religious themes and seasons are displayed in prominent places in the school on a regular basis.
- b. How frequently do class groups, year groups and the whole school, gather for assemblies/para-liturgy/liturgy? Class masses are favoured over whole school masses, albeit the latter take place on special occasions e.g. on the death of Pope John Paul II. A number of school events are precluded by a mass in the school e.g. Annual Student Awards, Leaving Certificate Graduation, Deceased members of the Past Pupils Union and Opening of the school Year (mass for staff).
- c. What provision is made for Reconciliation services in the school community? One of the chaplains is available to hear confessions on a monthly basis.
- d. What is the role of the whole school staff in Liturgical celebrations? Staff are invited to take part in the liturgies at the above times.
- e. What are the criteria for Retreats in the school? How are they funded? Optional retreats are held for senior students in the Edmund Rice Centre using visiting retreat teams. Students are charged a small sum to defray the costs. This is waived in needy cases.
- f. Is there a time for reflection/prayer at the beginning of staff meetings? The Edmund Rice prayer is said before most meetings of staff, B.O.M., Parents Council and P.P.U.
- g. In the event of a sudden death of a student or staff member, do you have an appropriate prayer service or agreed response? - Yes

Outreach Programmes

The physical expression of the distinctiveness of a school and the importance given to religious education is nowhere more evident and obvious than in its visibility within the school walls. Religious Education should always seek to be experiential through faith in action.

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| <p>a. <u>How and where is reflection on local and global problems encouraged?</u>
Developing World Immersion Programme (Calcutta 2005) Edmund Rice Awards, local and national fundraisers e.g. Trocaire, Bothar and many others.</p> |
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Parental and Parish Involvement

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

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| <p>a. <u>What opportunities are there to inform parents of the aims, objectives and content of R.E. programmes?</u> Parents are encouraged to attend the masses at the school events mentioned above. Parents also are given an outline of the school's R.E. programme at the Open Day and in the School Prospectus.</p> <p>b. <u>How may parents be actively involved in the R.E. programme in your school?</u> Parents support many charitable initiatives through contributions and from time to time by becoming actively involved in associated events e.g. India Immersion Programme 2005.</p> <p>c. <u>What opportunities exist to encourage Parish Clergy to link with the school?</u> Class, year and school masses, confessions and prayer services at various times.</p> |
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Inclusion

How we respond to international students of various faiths reflects our understanding of what it means to be a Catholic, Edmund Rice School.

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| <p>a. <u>Do you have a policy for the facilitation of students of different faiths who choose not to participate in RE classes?</u> Pupils whose parents request that their sons do not receive instruction in Religious Education or who are non Catholics or of no denomination are exempted from participation in R.E. classes but are required to stay in the room under teacher supervision</p> <p>b. <u>As a school, how do you encourage and support the religious and moral development of these students?</u> They are encouraged to take part in all the activities of the school including those of a charitable nature. The ethos of the school hopefully influences them in a positive way contributing to their moral and social development.</p> |
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Section Three

Success Criteria:

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. In order that the tasks of monitoring and evaluation are effective, consideration of the following may be helpful:

Monitoring and Review of Policy

It is the decision of each school how the RE policy is both monitored and reviewed. The following are some suggestions:

- The RE department will monitor policy implementation.
- Good communication between the RE Department and school management.
- At the end of each year, the RE department meet to evaluate the success of the policy implementation.

Timeframe

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

This policy will come into effect at the start of school year 2005/2006.

It will be reviewed after three years.