

St. Mary's College Dundalk



Religious Education Policy

Approved by Board of Management on 16th September 2008

Section One

School Mission Statement

St. Mary's College is a Catholic Secondary School under the patronage of the Marist Fathers. The primary aim of the school, through its spiritual and humanistic endeavours, is to promote and develop a sense of community where those entrusted to its care can be brought to the fullness of their human potential in accordance with the teachings of the Gospel. The school through its academic, pastoral and spiritual undertakings strives to provide for the holistic development and welfare of each of the students in its care.

Vision of a Marist School

- A Catholic school in the Marist tradition: reflecting the Marist education and religious philosophy.
- An educational community: developing and maintaining effective communication and mutual respect between trustees, management, staff, students and parents/guardians.
- A responsive school: responding to and catering for the particular spiritual, personal, social, academic and vocational needs of its students and potential students.

Aims of Religious Education

- To assist the personal, social, moral, religious and spiritual development of all students.
- To celebrate faith and deepen sacramental awareness through experiences of prayer, ritual and liturgy.
- To foster an understanding of how God, religious traditions and the Christian tradition have contributed to our culture, personal lifestyle and interpersonal relationships and between individuals and their communities.

Policy Rationale

This policy allows us the opportunity to reflect on, explore and articulate what it means to be a Marist school. It is our hope and privilege to nurture and promote 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 the Marist Fathers and the implications of what it means to be a Catholic school in this Marist tradition in third millennium Ireland.

Policy Objectives

- 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 clarify aims, procedures and roles for religious education in the school.

Section Two

1. Staffing

Year/ Class	Teachers/ other Personnel (2008/9)
1 st 1a 1b 1c 1d 1e	Daniel Deery Catherine Shaw Catherine Shaw Andrea Flanagan Andrea Flanagan
2 nd 2a 2b 2c 2d 2e	Catherine Shaw Niamh Johnston Catherine Shaw Fionnuala Kinch
3 rd 3a 3b 3c 3d 3e	Catherine Shaw Anita Morgan Niamh Johnston Catherine Shaw Niamh Johnston
T.Y Modular Programme	Fionnuala Kinch Briege Kelly
5 th Modular Programme (Each teacher delivers a specific module)	Fionnuala Kinch Pippa Brady Niamh Johnston Briege Kelly Catherine Shaw
6 th Team Approach	Pippa Brady Anita Morgan Rosie Reynolds Catherine Shaw Daniel Deery Fionnuala Kinch Joe Kerley Niall Weldon

R.E Co-ordinators

Anita Morgan will hold this position for the school year 2008-9. Rosie Reynolds co-ordinates the 6th year programme.

Chaplaincy services

We endeavour to provide a full chaplaincy service. At present we have a chaplaincy service of 23 hours per week.

R. Reynolds (11hrs per week) and Fr. Jimmy Mc Elroy from the Marist fathers (12hrs per week).

- The chaplain assists in the co-ordination of religious education, faith development and the promotion of the Marist ethos in St. Mary's College.
- The chaplain works as a member of the religion team and the pastoral care team. In this role the chaplain liaises with all teachers, year heads, class tutors, other staff, the MEA, the diocesan advisor and local parishes in relation to faith formation.
- With the Religion teachers, the chaplain helps organise and celebrate liturgical events in the school.
- The chaplain is available to work with students, their parents and other members of the school community individually and in groups.

R.E Meetings

The 6th year R.E team meet once a week to discuss, evaluate and plan their programme. They also have planning meetings outside of school.

Teachers of other years meet on a regular basis to plan discuss and evaluate programmes.

The 1st year teachers and the chaplain have meetings at the beginning of the school year to organise the 1st year mass.

2. Curriculum and Resources

The status of Religious Education in St. Mary's College is reflected in the organisation of a set RE programme at both Junior and Leaving Certificate level.

- Three periods are allocated to religion per week from 1st year through to 5th year, with a two hour block of RE on a Tuesday morning for 6th years.
- In junior cycle the Junior Cert. exam syllabus is followed (with a degree of flexibility), although the students do not sit an exam.

The following topics are covered from first to third year:

- Communities of Faith
- Christianity
- Major World Religions
- Faith Formation
- Celebration of Faith
- Morality

In senior cycle the following topics are taught using a team teaching approach:

Transition Year

- 'Journey'
- 'The Cross'
- 'The Marist tradition'
- Celebrating Faith
- Social Outreach Modules

Fifth Year

- The meaning of life – search for God
- Relationships and sexuality education
- Morality in action

- A living faith – doing justice
- Personal development

Sixth Year

- The meaning of life
- Personal development
- Justice in action
- Celebrating faith

Text Books

Junior cycle: *Exploring Faith* by Tom Goan
Community of Love/Hope/Faith by Linda Quigley
All about Faith by Niall Boyle
Good News Bible

Senior cycle: no set text

Resources

Filing cabinet of teaching aids/worksheets etc.
 Collection of Videos / DVD's and CD's
 Bibles, New Testaments
 Magazines: Gate, Face-Up
 Resources from the Diocesan Advisor and 'An Tobar'

Facilities

Prayer Room, Audio Visual Room, Computer Room, GP Room, School Library, Chaplains Room and St. Mary's Church.

Policy regarding pupils opting out of R.E. classes

Religious Education is a core subject on the school curriculum and an integral part of the ethos of the school. Therefore all students attending St. Mary's College are expected to attend Religion Class. Students cannot be required to receive religious education against the wishes of the student's parents or against their own wishes once they turn 18 years of age. However withdrawal from religion class needs to be negotiated between school management and parents/guardians. The agreed decision must be confirmed in writing.

3. Staff Support and Development

Practical ways in which the R.E. department is supported by management

- R.E. teachers are released by management to attend courses for professional and spiritual development.
- The R.E. department is supported in the timetabling of R.E. classes and in the provision of personnel to participate in delivering the R.E. programmes.
- Financially, the department is supported in the subsidising of retreats, teaching resources and liturgical celebrations.

- Adequate time is given for the preparation of liturgies.
- It is school policy to allow teachers to attend in-service training when available.

Support Services that exist outside the school for RE teachers include:

- Marist Education Authority
- An Tobar
- Diocesan Advisors
- RTA

Budget

There is no allocated budget set out for R.E.

Financially, R.E. is supported by school funding that includes:

- The payment of outside personnel to help deliver the 6th year R.E. programme.
- The subsidising of retreats for all years.
- The subsidising of guest speakers and workshops for R.E. classes.
- The provision of materials used for R.E. classes, the Prayer Room, the R.E. Room and liturgical celebrations.

Induction programme for newly qualified teachers of Religion and newly appointed teachers

- New personnel meet the R.E. team at the beginning of the school year and are introduced to team members and informed of the school's R.E. programmes and activities.
- The chaplain and the other team members induct new members of the 6th year R.E. team into the programme.
- Regular subject meetings provide opportunities for new members to share experiences or concerns.
- Informal support among R.E. department in general is ongoing.

4. Faith formation and the Liturgical Year

Liturgical Seasons

The Catholic liturgical seasons are marked in the school. To foster an attitude of welcome to all it may also be appropriate to acknowledge the major feasts of other traditions. Each morning there is prayer delivered to the whole school community over the PA system

Class Liturgies / Para-liturgies and Masses

- Marist Feast Day celebration – September 12th: *Holy Name of Mary*.
- 1st Year: opening of year mass, reconciliation service. In class groups they have an Ash Wednesday service.
- 2nd Year: November, Advent and Lenten Prayer Services, one class Eucharist per year.
- 3rd Year: November, Advent and Lenten Prayer Services, one class Eucharist per year.
- TY: closing liturgy.
- 5th Year: small group liturgies, one class Eucharist per year.
- 6th Year: opening of year mass, Graduation mass, Remembrance Liturgy, Easter liturgy, Christmas liturgy in small groups.
- During Lent Mass is celebrated on a daily basis at lunchtime.

Reconciliation Services in the school community

- Provision is made for Reconciliation Services for all Students.

School Retreats

- There are retreats for all years. They are part funded by the students and the school.
- 1st Year: half-day class retreats facilitated by Chaplain and RE teacher.
- 2nd and 3rd Year: full day class retreats facilitated by local retreat team.
- TY and 5th Year: for the past three years have participated in the Dundalk Youth Mission Week and have a programme of events including a full day retreat.
- 6th Year: a full day retreat facilitated by the 6th year RE team or outside facilitators.

Reflection / prayer at the beginning of staff meetings

The Principal always begins with a reflection and an opening prayer.

Crisis Response Policy in the event of a sudden death of a student or staff member

There is a prayer service, prayers over the intercom and whatever other help is appropriate. At present we are working on developing a crisis response policy.

Outreach Programmes

St. Mary's College prides itself on being a caring school. This care is not limited to the boundaries of the school walls but extends into the community and further afield to other parts of this country and globally. As part of the Transition Year work experience the pupils do 3-5 days working with local community groups and organisations. This care is also shown through raising awareness and monies for various charity groups and organisations. A list of some of these groups and other charity fundraisers can be seen in the appendix.

Parental and Parish Involvement

- Parents are informed about the R.E. programme at P.T. meetings and other Information Sessions. Sometimes information is given to parents in the Chaplaincy Corner Newsletter which accompanies school reports.
- At present parents are involved in delivering the 6th year R.E. programme and in facilitating some of the retreats.
- At present Fr. John Harrington, Holy Family Parish, Fr K. Cooney and Fr. P.G. Byrne, assist in the school with masses and other liturgies. This year Fr. Jimmy McElroy has been available to the school on a daily basis.

Inclusion

- A genuinely Catholic ethos is based on universal values which are formative for people of all faith e.g. respect for humanity and the earth, a search for meaning, truth, goodness, beauty and charity.
- As a Marist school in the Catholic tradition we are a caring school community that promotes inclusiveness and mutual respect.

- The Religion programmes delivered in the school promote understanding of other faiths as well as the Christian faith.
- In liturgical events and rituals the major feasts of other traditions may be acknowledged.
- The importance of inclusive prayer and reflection is encouraged in class and Morning Prayer.
- The prayer room is available to all students.
- Peer teaching within R.E. is encouraged, where students are invited to speak to their classes and other classes about their beliefs and religious practices.
- Retreats are organised for all students as a spiritual experience.
- In the school, in line with the CPSMA (Catholic Primary School Management Association), no student is prevented from wearing a religious garment in accordance with their tradition; for example, the hijab for Muslim girls and the turban for Sikh boys. This is in keeping with the Catholic understanding of its identity as being a universal Church. On the other hand, the wearing of a full veil over a girl's face could constitute a hazard and will not be forbidden on health and safety grounds.

Section Three

Monitoring and Review of Policy

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.

Appendix

Charity

Cancer Charities

Gary Kelly Centre, Drogheda

North Louth Hospice

Irish Hospice Foundation

Our Lady's Hospital, Crumlin

Action Breast Cancer

The Marie Keating Foundation

Marist Foreign Missions

St. Vincent de Paul

Trocaire

Aware, World Aids Day

North

East Rape Crisis Centre

Operation Christmas Child

Amnesty International

Event(s)

Christmas card Selling, Fashion Show, Flag Days, Carol Singing daffodil day and free dress days

6th year RE Justice Fundraising Morning, raffle, recipe book selling and selling of Mission Produce

Christmas Hampers, School Concerts

Sponsored Fasts, Trocaire Boxes

Bag packing and street collections

Shoe boxes at Christmas

Friendship bracelets, letter writing and cake sales

Other awareness raising and fund raising that have happened in the last three years include the following.

I.S.P.C.C.

Cura, Woman's Aid, The Birches

D.K.I.T. African Aid

Dyslexia Association

Tsunami Boat Appeal

Liberian Book Appeal

L.S.P.C.A.

Down Syndrome Ireland

Kids for Kids UNICEF

Irish Wheelchair Association

Jack and Jull Foundation

National Children's Hospital

CRC

St. Patrick's Missions, Kiltegan

Beslan Appeal

The Love of Christ

Breakfast Bash, Dessert Day, Wrist Bands

Auctions and Coffee Mornings

Sponsored events morning part of 6th Year R.E. Justice

Games Day

Free Dress Day

Book collection

Cake Sale, Raffle

Ice Cream and Honey Selling

Free Dress Day

Sponsored Match

Mobile Phone Collection

Pancake morning

Santa Bear Appeal

Shamrock selling

Pen selling

Posters

African AIDS Children's Charity

Dundalk Simon Community

Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital

Clothes Collection

Sponsored teacher run.