

St Dominic's Secondary School

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION POLICY

1. Rationale:

St Dominic's Ballyfermot is a Catholic Voluntary Secondary School in the Dominican tradition and part of the Le Cheile Schools trust.. As a Catholic school, "*We in St. Dominic's aim to provide a Christian education, inspired by the Dominican motto "Truth", which fosters the education of the whole person*". St Dominic's therefore, strives to be a community centered on Christ, and on Gospel values, where all work together, learn to make informed judgments, pray together and forgive each other. Religious Education is regarded as central to this philosophy.

2. Context:

There are varying levels of faith experience and faith commitment in our school reflecting the wider cultural context of the Church in Ireland today.

3. Aims of R.E. in the School:

The general aim of Religious Education is to awaken people to faith and then to help them throughout their lives to deepen and strengthen that faith. The fundamental principles governing the Religious Education of students in this school may be stated as follows:

The Religious Education Programme is at the core of spiritual formation. This programme: ¹

- For Christians, is built on and is faithful to the heritage of Scripture, the teachings and living tradition of the Church. It is based on Christ as the meaning and model of human living.
- Fosters the growth of faith at personal and community levels, especially through understanding and participating in prayer and liturgy.
- Provides an intellectual framework for reflecting on life decisions and encourages students to give witness to the integration of faith and life

In summary, the religious education of students in this school is an interdisciplinary affair, grounded in educational theory and practice and closely but critically connected to the contemporary culture.

4. A - Curriculum: Aims

Junior classes are following the State Syllabus for Religious Education. ²

This approach promotes intellectual religious development, provides a concrete knowledge base and gives students a tangible goal on a par with other disciplines.

The General Aims of this Syllabus are as follows:

- 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.

¹ Le Cheile schools charter

² *Junior Certificate Religious Education Syllabus*, (Dublin: Stationery Office, 2000)

- To identify how understandings 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 lifestyle, interpersonal 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.

We are aware that the State Syllabus in R.E. is non-confessional and is built around a framework of knowledge, understanding, skills and attitudes. The Syllabus does encourage and support the students in their reflections on their experiences of religion and their commitments to particular religious traditions but cannot and does not examine personal faith and practice. Both can be fostered in the interactions in the religious education classroom and in the prayer life of the school. Every effort is made to provide students with opportunities to integrate theology with life experience and to engage in creative liturgical celebrations. (See Paragraph 6 on Liturgy and Paragraph 9 on Justice and Peace).

As a Catholic school, we are guided in our teaching by a publication of the Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference, 'Guidelines for the Faith Formation and Development of Catholic Students studying the State Syllabus'.³ In this document, nine additional aims of a faith formational approach to the syllabus are cited.

As a result of studying the syllabus, students will be enabled:

- To become aware of their own identity and worth as human beings who are created in the image of God and are in need of redemption from sin.
- To develop an awareness of the spiritual dimension of human life, of the mystery of God, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit as understood in the Trinitarian concept of Catholic teaching and revelation.
- To interpret the events and experiences of life through a better understanding of what it means to be a Catholic Christian.
- To learn by guidance and example how better to express their relationship with God, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit.
- To deepen their sense of belonging to the Church; to participate more fully in the Church's liturgy and life, prayer, worship and retreats.
- To acquire the virtues of the Christian life through social justice issues based on praxis, by developing a sense of solidarity with others in the service of humankind.
- To have ever greater respect for, and appreciation of, Sacred Scripture and to act in accordance with the values of the Gospel by bringing its truth to the world.
- To understand the teaching of the Church and its relevance to the questions, problems, aspirations and hopes of the modern world.
- To understand faith perspectives other than their own and the values and beliefs of those that don't espouse any religious affiliation.⁴

Senior Cycle students have the option to follow the exam syllabus, non exam syllabus or the Leaving certificate applied syllabus.

Leaving Certificate religious education offers continuity and progression from the Junior Certificate programme. The aims outlined below are the aims for religious education for assessment and certification in the post-primary school⁵.

³ Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference, *Guidelines for the Faith Formation and Development of Catholic Students*, (Dublin: Veritas, 1999)

⁴ *Guidelines for the Faith Formation and Development of Catholic Students*, Page 6.

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

The above aims are also applicable to the non-religious syllabus but will offer less detail in the content.

Leaving Certificate applied seeks to support the holistic aims of education by promoting personal growth and facilitating spiritual development. It engages the students in the human search for meaning and offers them an opportunity to reflect, understand and interpret that experience in the light of our changing world. It invites students to examine religious stories, and where appropriate, their own religious story, and to value their place within it now and in the future. It exposes them to a broad range of religious traditions and encourages the promotion of mutual understanding and tolerance. It facilitates moral development through the application of a process of moral decision-making.⁶

B – Curriculum: Content (Junior Cycle)

Students complete five of the six sections of the syllabus. The specific aims of each section are:

Section B: Foundations of Religion – Christianity

Aims:

- To explore the context into which Jesus was born
- To identify the Gospels as the main source of knowledge about Jesus.
- To examine the meaning of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus for his followers, then and now. (See Syllabus: Pages 14-19 and Guidelines: Pages 20-21)

Section C: Foundations of a major world Religion- Islam

Aims:

- To explore in detail a major world religion*
 - To examine the impact of this religion on its followers today and
 - on other individuals and communities
- *Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, or Judaism. (see Syllabus:Pages page 24-29)

Section A: Communities of Faith

Aims:

- To explore the nature and pattern of human communities.
- To identify the characteristics of communities of faith/churches.

⁵ Religious Education Syllabus for Leaving Certificate, Page 9

⁶ Religious Education Syllabus for Leaving Certificate Applied. Page 7

- To examine these characteristics as they occur in communities of faith/churches in local, national and international examples. (See Syllabus: Pages 8-13 and Guidelines: Pages 18-19)

Section D: The Question of Faith

Aims:

- To explore the situation of religious faith today.
- To identify the beginning of faith in the asking of questions and the search for answers.
- To recognise expressions of human questioning in modern culture.
- To identify the characteristics of religious faith.
- To examine challenges to religious faith today.
- To offer opportunities for the exploration of, and reflection on, personal faith positions. (See Syllabus: Pages 26-31 and Guidelines: Pages 24-25)

Section E: The Celebration of Faith

Aims:

- To show how ritual and worship have always been part of the human response to life and to the mystery of God.
- To identify how communities of faith express their day-to-day concerns in various forms of ritual.
- To explore an experience of worship.
- To explore the link between patterns of worship and mystery, that which is of ultimate concern to individuals and communities. (See Syllabus: Pages 32-37 and Guidelines: Pages 26-27)

Section F: The Moral Challenge

Aims:

- To explore the human need to order relationships at the personal, communal and global levels.
- To explore how this need can be explored in a variety of ways.
- To identify how this need is expressed in civil and other legal codes.
- To show how religious belief is expressed in particular moral visions.
- To explore the moral visions of two major world religions, one of which should be Christianity.
- To analyse the impact of these visions on the lives of believers and non-believers in considering some current moral issues.
- To introduce students to some aspects of the relationship between religion, morality, and state law. (See Syllabus: Pages 38-43 and Guidelines: Pages 28-29)

Journal Work: (Second and Third Year)

Students will be required to keep a journal for the Junior Certificate examination. A title for journal work will be selected from twelve titles.

Aims:

- To facilitate a variety of teaching and learning methods.
- To promote the development of skills in research, analysis, drawing conclusions, presentation, etc.
- To afford the students the opportunity to encounter religion as part of life.

- To facilitate the exploration of an area of personal interest or concern to the student. (See Syllabus: Pages 44-47 and Guidelines: Pages 31-32)

Resources:

The following texts are the key resources in use at Junior Cycle level:

Duffy, Connie – **The New Religion for Living Series** (Dublin: Hawthorn, 2003)

Quigley, Linda – **Community of Faith, Hope and Love** (Dublin: Veritas, 2002)

Ryan, Tom and Goan, Sean – **Exploring Faith** (Dublin: Celtic Press, 2004)

Assessment:

First Years sit examinations of one hour in December and in May.

Second Year examinations are of one hour in December and May.

Third Years sit their December exams and then their mock examination in February/March. These exams take place over 2 hours.

Where possible exams should be common papers. Exams take place in a designated area given by the exam secretary. All marks are registered on the official school report.

J.C.S.P

All Junior students take part in J.C.S.P . Statements 6-11 are the statements which the department follows with the students. The department takes part in any cross curricular projects it can take part in.

Homework

Homework is given in line with the policy of the school.

C – Curriculum Content: Senior Cycle

Students have the option of leaving certificate exam religion and non exam religious education. Leaving certificate applied students will follow the applied syllabus. T.Y students will follow a modular structure.

The Senior Cycle Curriculum is modular in structure.

Transition Year: Students will complete four of the modules.

Module 1: Module 2:

Module 3:

Module 4:

Module 5:

Module 6

Fifth Year: Exam religion

Section A: The search for meaning and values (syllabus page 15-24)

Aims

1. To present religions as systematic responses to perennial questions common to all peoples about the meaning of life in the world.

2. To develop an understanding of the nature of this search for meaning through an examination of questions arising in personal experience.
3. To examine philosophical and religious answers to the questions of the meaning of life and its ultimate grounding.
4. To examine the philosophical and religious answers to the questions of the existence of God, and the nature of divine revelation.
5. To examine the role of religion in the secular world.

Section B: Christianity: origins and contemporary expressions(syllabus p25-37)

Aims

1. To present the study of origins as the key to evaluating the present and envisaging an alternative future.
2. To develop an appreciation of the early Christian movement and to correlate this with contemporary expressions of Christianity.
3. To identify the distinctive features of Christianity within the historical, social, and religious context of both the Palestinian and Greco-Roman society of the first century c.e.
4. To recognise the diversity and adaptability of the movement in addressing the search for meaning that was a feature of life at that time.
5. To examine contemporary religious and Christian identity in the light of our understanding of its founding vision and its earliest expressions.

Fifth Year: Non Exam religion

Section A: The search for meaning and values(syllabus page 154-155)

Aims

- 1 To explore the human need to question and to identify the great questions.
- 2 To explore some of the ancient and contemporary answers to the great questions.
- 3 To identify the pattern of religious faith in response(s) to the great questions.
- 4 To examine the place of religious faith in contemporary society.

Section B: Christianity (syllabus p156-157)

Aims

- 1 To explore the historical context into which Jesus was born.
- 2 To develop an understanding of the message and vision of Jesus in the context of his time.
- 3 To examine the early Christian movement – its identity and vision.
- 4 To investigate contemporary and historical attempts to return to the original vision.

Section C: Religious faiths in Ireland Today (syllabus page 158-159)

Aims

1. To encourage respect and appreciation for the richness of religious traditions in Ireland today.
2. To explore at least two major living religious traditions and to compare and contrast elements of these.
3. To examine the emergence of new religious movements in Ireland today.

Section D: Morality in Action(syllabus page 1660-161)

Aims

- 1 To understand the stages of moral development.
- 2 To introduce students to a process for moral decision-making and consider the implication of these for personal decision-making.
- 3 To understand the elements and context of moral decisions.
- 4 To critically reflect on a range of moral issues from a religious perspective.

Fifth Year: Leaving Certificate Applied

Module 1: Looking in

This module aims to:

- enable students to explore the place of religion in their lives
- encourage students to examine how images of God influence faith
- facilitate investigation of different forms of prayer and ritual
- provide opportunities for participation in and/or observation of liturgical celebrations.

Module 2: Our Religious Story

This module aims to enable the student to:

- identify the role of story in religious tradition
- develop an awareness of the plurality of religious traditions that exist in Ireland today
- examine ways in which commitment to faith can be put into practice in their local communities
- analyse the treatment of religious and moral issues in the media.

Sixth Year: Exam Religion

Section C: World Religions (syllabus page 37-45)

Aims

1. To identify religion as a living and evolving phenomenon and to examine some of the different types of religion.
2. To explore at least two of the major living religious traditions and to compare and contrast elements of these.
3. To examine some contemporary manifestations of religion in major traditions, minor traditions, and in new religious movements.

Section 3

Any one section from Part 3 can be chosen, excluding those designated for coursework

These can be found on pages 55-110

Coursework

Course work should begin in 5th year and in 6th year the final coursework should be submitted by the date allocated by the department of education and science.

Sixth Year: Non Exam Religion

Section E: God Talk (syllabus p162-163)

- 1 To examine present image of God and compare to childhood image.
- 2 To examine images of God in art/music/literature and contemporary culture.
- 3 To examine images of God in two major religions.
- 4 To explore images of God in scripture/sacred texts.

Section F: A living faith doing Justice (syllabus page 158-159)

Aims

- 1 To introduce the basic principles and methods of social analysis.
- 2 To identify and analyse the links between religious belief and commitment, and action for justice and peace.
- 3 To explore a range of justice issues from a religious perspective.
- 4 To engage in action for justice as an expression of faith in action.

Section G: Celebrating faith (syllabus page 166-167)

Aims

- 1 To develop an awareness of how prayer, ritual and worship have always been a part of the human response to life.
- 2 To explore some of the expressions of prayer, ritual and meditation in a variety of cultures and religious traditions.

Section H: Story (syllabus page168-169)

- 1 To understand the power of story to communicate a truth on many levels.
- 2 To explore the meaning of 'truth' in the Bible or another sacred text.
- 3 To explore the transformative power of story past and present.

Sixth Year: Leaving Certificate Applied Religion

Module 3: A living faith

This module aims:

- to guide the students in the identification of values in moral issues
- to introduce students to a process for moral decision making
- to explore issues of Christian morality
- to recognise the potential for growth in moral values and decision making
- to compare and contrast the moral visions of a variety of religious traditions.

Module 4: World Religions

This modules aims:

- to encourage student exploration and understanding of Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam and Judaism
- to identify the main beliefs of these faiths
- to provide opportunities for comparison of belief and practices between these religions
- to explore current issues in world religions
- to address the issue of new religious movements and to inform students about these movements.

Resources:

The Inner Place -Gunning Tom published by veritas

Into the deep- Gunning Tom published by veritas

Faith in action- Boyle Niall published by Gill McMillian

The Search for Meaning and Values-Section A, series editor is Micheál de Barra, published by veritas

Faith Seeking Understanding - Sections B,C,D, series editor is Micheál de Barra, published by veritas

The Search for Meaning and Values-Section A, teachers book by Eoin Cassidy, published by Veritas

World Religions Into the Classroom Series - Section C, Teacher Text BY Philip Barnes, published by veritas

Christianity : Origins and Contemporary Expressions Into the Classroom Series - Section B,

Teachers Text by Norris and Leahy, published by Veritas.

Ncca guidelines for teachers and syllabus

www.ress.ie

Folders can be found on the staffroom computers with various resources that can be used.

Various novels and DVDs can be used in conjunction with the topics above.

Assessment:

5th year Exam: December and May- 1 hour 30 minutes

5th year non exam: December and May- 1 hour
5th year L.C.A: Assessed on key assignments
6th year Exam: December and February/May -2hours
6th year non exam: December 1 hour
Exams take place in a designated area given by the exam secretary. All marks are registered on the official school report.

Homework

Homework is given in line with the policy of the school.

D – Curriculum: Timetable

All classes in this school are timetabled for three periods of R.E. per week. Sixth Year exam have 5 classes a week.

E – Curriculum: Resources

Each teacher has their own room with a data projector and white board. Resources are shared through the use of the school computer. Each member of the religion department makes their resources available to other members of the department. Further resources can be found in the prayer room.

F – Curriculum: Attendance at R.E.

Attendance is compulsory within Religious education class unless directed by management. The religion department follows the St Dominics attendance policy.

5. Budget:

A budget is allocated each year to the department from the board of management.

6. Staffing:

All teachers of R.E. are required to possess qualifications in the subject that satisfy the Teaching Council and the Diocesan authorities

Comment [kob1]: This is up to Mary

Team members take on particular roles.

A: The Department Co-ordinators:

The function of the Co-ordinators is to promote and maintain a spirit of teamwork among the teachers of the subject.

Comment [kob2]: Should we put in how we operate

Responsibilities include:

Meeting with the principle
Chairing meetings and taking minutes
Organising liturgical services
Organising the distribution of the journal booklets and forms
Liaising with other staff.

Comment [kob3]: Any more

B: Meetings

Meetings between the R.E are scheduled for 3 times a year. At these meetings yearly and term plans are discussed. Results, teaching strategies and various other topics are discussed. Feedback from these meetings are discussed with management

C. Prefects:

Prefects are appointed to assist the Department in the following areas:
General Religious Education, and Liturgy.

D. The R.E. teachers are members of the Religion Teachers Association. They attend regular in-service organised by the Subject Association, the Diocesan Advisors and the Le Cheile network.

7. Liturgy:

We recognise that good liturgical experience is vital to the faith formation of our students.⁷ For many of them, school is their only experience of a praying Christian Community. Liturgical celebrations take place throughout the year and are prepared by the students, R.E. team, and the Music Department. We aim to involve as many students as possible in our celebrations.

A liturgical calendar is prepared for the year. There are additional liturgies for key events that may take place in any year such as deaths. These rituals are regarded as key responses in traumatic times and form a key position in the school's critical incident policy. Good catechesis at this time makes provision for prayer, meditation, reflection, a listening ear, sensitivity, silence and above all gives witness to the love of Christ.⁸ A weekly reflection is read each week by student.

Calendar

Date	Service/Class Focus
September	Service to open the Academic Year
November	Service for the Dead
November/December	Advent
December	Carol Service
February/March	Lent
April	Easter
May	Graduation Mass for Sixth Years

All liturgical seasons are highlighted. Icons, Religious Images and Crucifixes are placed in prominent positions in the school. The school has a designated Prayer Room.

Choir:

One of varied roles of Choir is to assist in the very liturgical celebrations that may occur throughout the year.

8. Retreats:

Retreats are spiritual experiences that recognise and acknowledge the human context of the students but go beyond this to the faith context.⁹ All Retreat experiences offered in this school are optional and therefore are attended by students who choose to be there. Retreats are funded through subsidies from the school and a personal donation from the participants.

9. Parents and Guardians:

⁷ *Guidelines for the Faith Formation and Development of Catholic Students*, Page 11.

⁸ *Ibid.* Page 12.

⁹ *Ibid.* Page 90.

Parents/Guardians are the primary educators of their children. We welcome opportunities to support parents/guardians in their role. How do we do this?

- We meet parents/guardians at the structured parent-teacher meetings and provide them with information on the aims, objectives and content of the R.E. programme. We use these meetings to clarify questions and issues that may arise.
- The R.E. team outlines the programme and displays samples of work to the parents/guardians of incoming first years at our annual Open Day. This meeting enables the new parents/guardians to link with the R.E. team.
- We develop these links further by attending any social gatherings organised for the parental body.
- Parents are invited to various liturgical celebration which occurs.

10. Parish/Diocese:

“The Parish is the primary Eucharistic community, the place of worship, service and welcome; it is the pre-eminent place for catechesis.”¹⁰

A number of parishes are represented in our school. Because of the numbers, our connection with these parishes is minimal. We make efforts to establish links, however, and invite priests from these parishes to participate. We are happy to publicise youth events and welcome speakers both clerical and lay. We inform all Parishes of the names of Ministers of the Eucharist commissioned in the school who are resident in each Parish.

We have a special affinity with the Ballyfermot parish. The Church of the Assumption has been the venue for our whole school religious gatherings. Our Folk Group has sung at Masses in the parish

We welcome the diocesan advisers for religious education on their annual visit to the school. We

¹⁰ Ibid, Page 12.

attempt to have at least one representative at the diocesan in-service and we arrange a time for that person to share resources and information at a team meeting.

Teachers are active in the Religion Teachers Association and access new publications and resources.

11. Ecumenism and Inter-Faith Dialogue:

We welcome the presence of students of other faiths and see their contribution in religion class as fostering mutual understanding, tolerance and respect.

Review

This policy will be reviewed by the Board of Management in 2013

This policy was approved by the Board of Management of St. Dominic's Secondary School on

Signed: _____
Chairperson of Board of Management.

Date: _____