

Meánscoil na mBráithre Críostaí, Cill Chainnigh

Christian Brothers Secondary School, Kilkenny.

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RELIGIOUS EDUCATION POLICY May 2023

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

CBS Kilkenny is an all boys voluntary secondary school with a Catholic ethos under the trusteeship of the Edmund Rice Schools Trust (ERST). This policy is informed by the 1998 Education Act which states that schools are required to promote the moral, spiritual, social and personal development of students (section 9(d)). It is also informed by the ERST Charter. 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 affords 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 foster 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 students.
- To appreciate the richness of religious traditions and to provide a framework to engage with 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. It aims to assist:

Board of Management

- To approve the policy and ensure its implementation.

Principal and Deputy Principals

- To support the procedures of the policy and ensure its effective implementation.

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 (DE) will allow.

In addition to the above, this policy is informed by:

- CBS Kilkenny Admissions Policy
- CBS Kilkenny Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) Policy
- CBS Kilkenny Code of Behaviour
- CBS Kilkenny Child Protection Policy/Child Safeguarding Statement
- CBS Kilkenny ICT Acceptable Use Policy
- CBS Kilkenny Special Educational Needs Policy
- CBS Kilkenny Whole School Support and Guidance Policy
- CBS Kilkenny Pastoral Care Policy

- CBS Kilkenny Anti Bullying Policy
- CBS Kilkenny Visiting Speaker Policy
- CBS Kilkenny RSE Policy
- CBS Kilkenny GDPR Policy
- CBS Kilkenny Wellbeing School Improvement Plan 2018

together with all other relevant CBS Kilkenny policies.

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 vision and ultimate foundation from the person of Christ. We have a special commitment to the development of the spiritual dimension of the lives of our members. Faith formation and the Religious Education program play a key role. Students follow the state program in Religious Education that is suitable for students of all faiths and those of no faith. 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 an inclusive democratic society.

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

1) Experiential

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.

2) Exploration

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.

3) Reflective

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
- Encourages the development of a curriculum which promotes the harmonious growth of the whole person
- Enhances the local community by participating in initiatives which promotes Christian values.

Aims of Religious Education:

- To foster good relationships between students themselves, between students 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 students, 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 the place of RE within the school timetable. Students are taught by:

- Qualified RE teachers
- RE Coordinator
- Part-time chaplain

All 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 Cycle (JC) and Leaving Certificate (LC) level. Three classes are devoted to RE weekly for JC and LC (non-exam). Five classes are devoted to the Leaving Certificate RE Exam. Careful planning and the allocation of appropriate resources are prioritised by CBS Kilkenny.

Staff Support and Development

Effective RE requires complex planning and organisation. The RE department meets on a regular basis throughout the academic year to prepare liturgical services and other events as appropriate. The very nature of the RE class requires teachers to engage with CPD which enhances their teaching skills and resources. The RE Department is supported through:

- Financial support for RE related activities
- Chaplain accompaniment on TY school trip
- Whole staff support for liturgies
- Staff commitment to and appreciation of the ethos
- Edmund Rice Camps
- Gaisce Awards
- Diocesan Day for Teachers of RE

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 school.

Liturgical Year / School Year

- Opening mass – September
- November - Mass for the dead/Remembrance Service
- Advent /Carol service
- 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.
- Critical Incident Response Team – Staff, Chaplain and NEPS
- All class students have the option of attending funeral of parent/close relative of fellow student.
- Westcourt - available for reflection days with Chaplain.
- Catholic Schools Week
- Retreats
- 6th Year Spiritual Walk/Climb
- 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. RE should always seek to be experiential, through faith in action and cross curricular. This is evident in the following programmes:

- Edmund Rice Awards
- Collections for various charities
- Volunteers for Lourdes
- Community Care Programme in TY
- Concern Fast
- Carol singing/trad band 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
- Catholic Schools Week initiative

Parental and Parish Involvement

Schools are most successful in achieving their religious goals when the school, home and parish mutually support each other through:

- Parents Council
- Parent-Teacher Meetings
- Information meetings for TY parents - (emphasis on aims/goals of TY & CBS)
- 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 class teacher/Year Head meets with the parents
3. The class teacher/Year Head explains the RE policy and the three options the school can provide for the withdrawal of their son from RE classes.
4. Parents are required to complete the formal documentation to facilitate this withdrawal from RE with a Form of Consent.

This policy has been reviewed in accordance with CBS Kilkenny Child Safeguarding Statement and in line with the Children First Act 2015 and the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools 2017.

While renewing this policy, due consideration has been given to all aspects of the wellbeing of students at CBS Kilkenny and particularly to the Wellbeing School Improvement Plan (May 2018).

General Data Protection Regulation came into force in May 2018, and this policy has been reviewed in accordance with best practice as detailed in this legislation.

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.

The school authorities will review this policy on a regular basis in order to stay up to date with current best practice and with relevant legislation in this area.

Approval

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

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Chairperson, Board of Management