

**Ard scoil na
Tríonóide**

Religious Education

**And Faith
Formation**

Policy

Ardscoil na Tríonóide

Religious education and faith formation policy

MISSION STATEMENT

Árdscoil na Tríonóide is inspired by the educational vision of the Venerable Catherine McAuley and Blessed Edmund Ignatius Rice. It exists to provide a center of learning where Christian values underpin and pervade all activities, where each member of the school community is cherished and respected.

In Árdscoil na Tríonóide, emphasis is placed on the moral and spiritual formation of students along with their intellectual, social and physical development. Students are encouraged to strive towards academic excellence.

This school community advocates, and will develop, a strong sense of social justice. It is intended that the experience of education in Árdscoil na Tríonóide will be happy and creative, enabling each participant to strive to fulfil his/her potential.

Ardscoil na Tríonóide is a Health Promoting School and is cognisant of the central role the school plays in supporting and promoting students' learning about wellbeing and for wellbeing. (Guidelines for Wellbeing in Junior Cycle 2017)

In Ardscoil na Tríonóide we endeavour to provide learning opportunities to enhance the physical, mental, emotional and social wellbeing of students. This enables students to build life skills and develop a strong sense of connectedness to their school and to their community.

Ardscoil na Tríonóide also takes into account the Children First Act, 2015, the updated Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children published in 2017 and the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools 2017 published by the Department of Education and Skills.

The trustees of Árdscoil na Tríonóide are committed to the successful implementation of education legislation, in particular the Education Act (1998), the Education (Welfare) Act 2000, the Equal Status Act 2000 and the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act 2004.

Árdscoil na Tríonóide is grant aided by the Department of Education and Science. In addition, it receives extra funds from various fundraising activities.

THE SCOPE OF THE POLICY:

As a CEIST school, this religious education policy will impact on the whole school community. Each member of the school community participates in the educational process by the example of a Christian way of life and by recognizing the dignity of each individual. Faith formation is the responsibility of the whole school community.

The scope will reach:

- **BOARD OF MANAGEMENT:** To promote and support the Catholic ethos of Árdcoil na Tríonóide in accordance with the CEIST charter and Mercy tradition.
To approve the policy and ensure its implementation.
- **PRINCIPAL/DEPUTY PRINCIPAL:** To support the procedures of the policy and ensure its effective implementation.
- **SCHOOL STAFF:** As teachers in a CEIST school, the aim is that the whole staff embraces and safeguards the ethos of the school and supports the cross – curricular nature of Religious Education. Each member of staff is deeply committed to his/her pupils and this commitment is informed by Gospel values.
- **TEACHERS OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION:** To ensure a high standard and effective delivery of Religious Education through collaboration, team work and as reflective practitioners.
- **CHAPLIN IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE PASTORAL CARE AND GUIDANCE TEAMS:** To assist in the faith development of students and to be a spiritual presence in the school.
- **PARENTS/GUARDIANS:** We recognize that parents/guardians are the primary educators of their children. Parents are submitting their son/daughter to supporting the school recognize and commit themselves on their own part, and on behalf of their son/daughter, to the school ethos and mission statement.
To take responsibility for their role in the faith formation of their children.
To support the R.E. Programme in the school and be open to participate in extra-curricular faith programmes and activities.
- **STUDENTS:** To participate in the R.E. programme.
To respect and be open to people of other races, cultures and religious traditions.
- **THE RATIONALE:** The rationale of the Religious Education policy at Árdcoil na Tríonóide is based on the Religious and Educational Philosophy of the CEIST charter. This policy allows us the opportunity to reflect on and explore what it means to be a Catholic school and articulate our commitment to the importance of formal religious and moral education. 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 Catherine McAuley and the implications of what it means to be a Catholic school in Ireland today.

CEIST IS COMMITTED: To holistic development of:

- To the achievement of the full potential of each student, particularly those who are poor and marginalized.
- It is a process informed and influenced by the teaching and example of Jesus Christ.
- Is conducted in an atmosphere of care, respect and joy.
- Is committed to ongoing whole-school development in collaboration and partnership with the Board of Management, Staff, Parents, Students and the wider community.
- Students experience Gospel values in the school's atmosphere – compassion, truth, love, hope, justice, respect, inclusiveness, equality, forgiveness and generosity govern the daily living and decision making of the school.

The general aim of Religious Education is to 'awaken people to faith and to help them throughout their lives to deepen and strengthen their faith' (Syllabus 1982, p. 4).

The general aim of Religious Education at Árdcoil na Tríonóide is that pupils should grow in faith:

- Through regular classes in religion we strive to deepen their knowledge and understanding of their faith.
- Through worship, prayer and the celebration of the sacraments in both large and small groups we strive to give them a living experience of the faith and deepen their relationship with Christ.
- Through individual consultation we strive to help to grow through their problems.

In accordance with our ethos we regard our staff as a major resource in the promotion of Religious Education and it is expected that all classes begin with a prayer. In keeping with the spirit of Catholic education the potential of the students will be attained in such personal, social and spiritual values as honesty, justice, peace, truth, respect, compassion, love and mercy.

SPECIFICALLY THE AIMS OF THE R.E. ARE: To explore how the human search for meaning is found and continues to find expression in religion.

To identify how understandings of God, religious tradition and in particular Christian tradition have contributed to the culture in which we live and how they continue to have an impact on personal lifestyle, interpersonal relationships and relationships between individuals and their communities and contexts.

To contribute to the spiritual and moral development of the student (Junior Cert Syllabus 2000, p. 5, Leaving Cert Syllabus 2003, p. 5). The Religious Education Policy is also informed by the Árdcoil na Tríonóide Mission Statement.

WE AIM TO ENSURE THAT EACH STUDENT LEAVING SCHOOL:

- Is a committed Christian, with knowledge of Catholic beliefs and has a personal relationship with Christ.

- Has developed abilities, talents and skills to his/her potential so as to enable her/him to contribute to the betterment of society.
- Has come to an appreciation of the beautiful, with a balanced attitude to learning, work and leisure.
- Has a healthy self-image, respects authority, acts responsibly and is sensitive to the needs of others.

The Religious Education Department in consultation with the Board of Management took a decision in 2007 to follow the prescribed Junior Cert syllabus and not to ask students to sit the state exam. Religious Education is a core subject at both Junior and Senior cycle. Throughout the school awareness is promoted of other faith communities and religions.

Formal texts are used at Junior Cycle and at 5th and 6th Yr level. In transition Year formal texts are not used but resource materials are provided by the teacher. The situation is constantly under review in the context of publication of new textbooks. (For course details please see appendix 1).

CLASS PERIODS: At both Junior and Leaving Certificate there are three class periods of forty minutes each per week.

FACILITIES AND RESOURCES: The financial allocation given to the Religious Education is comparable with other major curricular areas. Teachers may use a variety of resources that include internet websites, CD roms, videos, DVD's, photocopies, newspaper articles, maps, guest speakers, audio material, trips, liturgies and graphics that are suitable and relevant to the subject. When VHS and DVD's are concerned it is important to ensure they are suitable to the viewing audience and in the case of photocopying that legislation is adhered to. Resources are shared by the department.

The school Prayer Room – Our Lady's Oratory is available for both experimental learning and liturgical services provided that it is booked in advance by the R.E. teachers. It is important that the Prayer Room is recognized as a sacred place and is used as such.

An area for Religious Education materials is provided for use by the R.E. Department. These resources will be enhanced on a continuous basis.

Religious Education permeates the entire curriculum and it is expected that each member of staff will be cognizant with the CEIST charter and will bring this Religious and Educational Philosophy to bear in his/her treatment of material in the various subject areas within the school.

ASSESSMENT TECHNIQUES:

- In class examinations are held for all 1st-3rd year students at Christmas and for 1st and 2nd year students in June.
- Transition Year students are assessment on their project work.
- 5th and 6th year students are assessed at the end of each module.
- Availability of R.E. teachers at parent/teacher meetings.
- It is the policy of the R.E. teachers that each student has a special R.E. copy to process class material at Junior Cycle and folders are provided for 5th and 6th year students.

CULTURAL DIVERSITY:

Árdscoil na Tríonóide aims, with the resources available, to provide the best possible environment to cater for the cultural, educational, moral, physical, linguistic and spiritual values and traditions of all students.

We show special concern for the disadvantaged and respect diversity of beliefs, languages, traditions and ways of life in society.

The Board of Management makes reasonable provision and accommodation for all its students. Equality of access and participation in the school (including students with disability and special educational needs) will be in accordance with relevant legislation and with due regard to the efficient use of resources provided by the D.E.S.

We realize too, that we must cater for the changing needs of today's world. Being keenly aware of the ever increasing effect of outside influences on the lives of our students, we are even more concerned to maintain Christian values and practices.

From the introduction to the school the importance of Religious Education is emphasized to parents. Parents in completing their son/daughter's application to the school recognize and commit themselves on their own part (and on behalf of their son/daughters) to Catholic values, the school ethos and mission statement. All parents are aware that the school is permeated by a value driven ethos based on Gospel values. Religious Education in the Christian tradition is a core subject in Árdscoil na Tríonóide.

Students of other faiths are welcome with openness and respect in our school. In the case of non-Catholic students they are welcome to attend R.E. classes.

We recognize the presence in our school community of students from other faith traditions. Their beliefs are respected and these students are encouraged to participate in the liturgical life of our school if possible. Attention is drawn to the significant feast days and sacred times of other traditions through the religious notice board and in religion classes. Students are encouraged to share from their religious traditions as this enhances the education of all our students.

Catholic schools aim to open student's minds to the 'lifelong search for wisdom that is deeper than information, for an understanding of life that goes beyond knowledge and for an appreciation of the dignity of the other that is respectful of difference' (D. Lane, in Catholic Education and the school 1991).

NON-PARTICIPATION IN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

When parents/guardians wish their son/daughters not to study R.E. they must make a request in writing to the Principal. Such students will remain in the R.E. class, be on the R.E. teachers' roll and be subject to the R.E. teacher's instructions, thus the school can fulfil its duty of care under Health and Safety legislations.

During this time those students of other Religious traditions who are withdrawn from the subject are expected to study their own religion. This is not understood to be a study period.

All our R.E. teachers, are dedicated to implementing the R.E. policy of this school. Five are trained Catechists teaching both at junior and senior cycle.

The R.E. coordinator Sr. Concepta receives all information, which arrives by post pertaining to Religious Education. She passes this information on to other Religion Teachers. The Coordinator in consultation with other teachers of religion recommends books to be placed on the booklist every year. The coordinator is advised by the Trustees, the Education Office and the Principal of any other matter affecting Religious Education.

Meetings of the R.E. Department take place regularly so that all relevant teachers may communicate as a group. The aims of these meetings are to consistently review practice in the light of policy and to plan and organize school liturgies.

CHAPLAINCY SERVICES:

The Chaplaincy services currently available in Árdcoil na Tríonóide consist of one of the Priests of the Parish visiting the school. The Chaplain endeavors to be present for school liturgies, subject to his schedule.

The role of the Priest Chaplain is to be available for various liturgical celebrations during the school year, and be a sign of God's presence in the school.

RETREATS

It is our policy that retreats are provided for 4th and 5th year students when possible. The retreats are supported by the Religious Education Programmes at all levels with the aims to exploring the benefits, values and the rationale for the retreats as a prelude to the retreat itself. The retreat is not an end in itself but a work in progress. Before the retreat the Religious Education Co-ordinator will forward a copy of the school Mission Statement to the Retreat Team.

The Principal with the Religious Education Co-ordinator will arrange who will accompany the students to the place of retreat. Teachers will as outlined above prepare the students for the retreat by encouraging the students to participate with an open mind and good behavior. The School Code of Behaviour applies at all times.

The criteria for engaging the Retreat Team are:

- Reputation based on past experience
- Ability to take small groups
- Proximity
- Cost
- Participation is obligatory
- Failure to participate is subject to the same penalties as failure to attend any other core school activity
- Retreats are held on a one-day basis
- Retreats are funded by charging each student
- The school covers the cost of the buses to the Retreat Centre

PRAYER

Prayer is a topic in Religious Education classes at both Junior and Senior Cycle. In addition, it is school policy that each class begin with a period prayer. Similarly other meetings in the school e.g. staff meetings begin with a prayer.

Students are given the opportunity to participate in/observe meditation, reflection, prayer with the School Chaplain and or Class Teacher.

LITURGY

Gospel values are celebrated and deepened through prayer, symbol, ritual, liturgy and sacrament, within school life.

Christian symbols are displayed in each room within the school. These symbols are respected by all and will be updated appropriately.

Para Liturgy or Liturgy takes place in September (Mercy Day), October (First years and their parents), November (Service of Remembrance), Christmas, Catholic Schools Week, Seachtain na Gaeilge, Ash Wednesday, Summer (6th year Graduation Mass), and other occasions.

The school designated prayer area is the school Prayer Room. For assemblies of the whole school the Catherine McAuley Hall, Sports Hall or St. Michael's Parish Church is used.

The school provides awareness of the importance of Liturgical Events. The whole school staff is invited to participate in such events.

SOCIAL AWARENESS

Throughout the formal and informal school curriculum, there are opportunities for values based education. Pupils participate in experiential learning through areas such as social awareness. Teachers of all relevant subjects are encouraged in their teaching to reflect on social structures, to promote a preferential option for the poor, to take action for justice, to exercise care of the earth in a spirit of respect and welcome for diversity.

The school community reflects 'not simply an ideal taught but a value lived'. Gospel values are earned and experiences in daily interpersonal relations and moral principles are applied. In this climate the students are drawn to recognize the presence of God in others and in ordinary daily events.

The school seeks to facilitate understanding, empathy and compassion for the local needs by building up contacts with the local parish. A sense of justice and lifelong challenge is developed both through the Religious Education Programme and through other subject areas for example C.S.P.E., L.C.V.P., Home Economics, History, I.T., Geography and English. Reflection on global problems is encouraged throughout the curriculum.

Action Aid Programmes undertaken by the Religious Education Department include Mercy Global Concern, Concern Christmas Fast and Society of St. Vincent de Paul.

It is emphasized that the opportunity for participation in all areas of school activities is open to all students.

PARISH

Religious Education in the school community cannot be effective if it operates within a vacuum. We believe that an active Church at Parish and Diocesan level sows the seeds for the youth of today's church. There is a need both at parish and Diocesan level for initiatives that actively reach out to, and involve younger generations.

The school is situated in Athy parish and draws from neighboring parishes. Encouragement of students to participate in their own parish takes place when it arises as part of the Religious Education Curriculum and Action Projects and through interaction with the Priest Chaplain.

Priests & Ministers from feeder parishes are welcome to visit students from their parishes particularly where the school can assist in the encouragement of students to participate in the faith life of their own parish community.

IN-SERVICE

It is school policy that teachers are released from class to attend in-service organized by the Diocesan Advisor or the Second Level Support Service. This is in the context of updating and familiarizing Religious Education Teachers with resources and current developments in Junior and Senior Religious Education.

SCHOOL LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The Trustees delegate the management of the school to the Board of Management. In accepting the role of Management, the Board of Management acknowledges the apostolic purpose of the CEIST charter and the responsibility entrusted to it by the Trustees. Day-to-day management is delegated to the Principal.

In the exercise of this authority the Board of Management and the Principal will endeavor to ensure that:

- The Religious Education Policy is adhered to
- All members of the school community are made aware of the vision and legacy of Catherine McAuley
- Professional standards of education and management are maintained in the school
- Appointments and promotions of staff are made impartially and in the best interest of the school
- The focus on the importance of a value based Christian Education in the Catholic tradition is maintained and supported

POLICY MONITORING

Effective policy requires constant monitoring and evaluation to endure successful implementation and to review what adjustments may be necessary from time to time.

MONITORING AND REVIEW POLICY

At the end of each year, the Religious Education Department meet to evaluate the success of the policy implementation.