

Boherbue Comprehensive School Religious Education Policy

Scope of the Policy

In Boherbue Comprehensive School, this religious education policy will impact on the whole school community. The scope will reach:

➤ *Board of Management*

To approve 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 Boherbue Comprehensive 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 the faith development of students

➤ *Pastoral Care Personnel (year heads, Guidance Counsellor)*

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

➤ *Parents/ Guardians*

To support the R.E. programme in the school and facilitate the faith formation of their children

➤ *Students' Council*

To represent students

➤ *Students*

To participate in the R.E. 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

Boherbue Comprehensive School conscious of its position in the community endeavours to give the best education and service to its pupils and community based on Christian Values that will help all who come in contact with the School to reach their full potential.

Rationale

We hope to provide a caring and committed atmosphere with the partnership of staff, students and parents which enables our students to achieve their full potential. This partnership aims to foster the holistic development of all our students in a supportive, safe environment of mutual respect, which develops the uniqueness of each student. We aim to prepare our students for the rich and varied challenges that the journey of life may present in a pluralistic society.

Vision

The school is multi- denominational with a Christian ethos that reflects the majority of students in the school Inspired by this our school:

- Endeavours 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 that promotes the harmonious growth of the whole person
- Contributes to the building up of the local community
- Works for peace and justice in society
- Seeks to provide for all faiths

The goals/ objectives of this 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.

Staffing

We consider Religious Education to be such an integral part of our school ethos and school community that it is imperative we give it the status it deserves. At present there are four qualified teachers including the Chaplain on that staff of the school.

The chaplain's areas of responsibility include

- Personal and spiritual development of staff and students
- Liturgy and sacraments
- Pastoral and spiritual counselling
- Social justice outreach
- Maintain home- school links

The role of the R.E. co- coordinator is undertaken by the Chaplain. The R.E. co- ordinator does the following:

- Keeps management informed in relation to anything regarding R.E. in the school
- Organises meetings for teachers of R.E.
- Passes on information and resources to other members of the R.E. Department

Curriculum

The Junior Certificate Religious Education Programme is a core subject at 1st, 2nd and 3rd year levels but is not an examination subject. The State Syllabus for Religious Education is followed.

Aims of Junior Cycle Religious Education

- 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.
- 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.
- 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.

Objectives of Junior Cycle Religious Education

- 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 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.

Faith Formation in Religious Education

The State Syllabus in R.E. is non-confessional and is built around a framework of knowledge, understanding, skills and attitude but not faith formation. 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. 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"*. 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 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 explore faith perspectives other than their own and the values and beliefs of those who do not espouse any religious affiliation

Transition Year

Transition year students will follow a programme which has been formulated by the Religious Education Department in conjunction with the Transition Year Coordinator.

Senior Cycle

The optional framework for senior cycle religious education offers teachers a structure within which to plan a programme for senior cycle R.E. appropriate to students who are not taking R.E. as an examination subject for Leaving Certificate. It complements the Leaving Certificate syllabus and guidelines and thus allows for easy management of both. The senior cycle Religious Education Programme is a core subject at T.Y., 4th and 5th year but is not an examination subject.

The framework is presented in eight sections and it is recommended that students study at least two sections each year. The selection and sequencing of the sections can be varied to suit teacher and student interests.

- Section A: The search for meaning
- Section B: Christianity
- Section C: Religious faiths in Ireland today
- Section D: Morality in action
- Section E: God-talk
- Section F: A living faith – doing justice
- Section G: Celebrating faith
- Section H: Story

Textbooks

Junior Cycle	Senior Cycle
Religion for Living 1,2,3	World Religions and Beliefs
All about Faith 1,2,3	The inner Place
Pathways to God 1,2,3	Into the Deep
Teach me your ways	The Challenges of God
Show us the way	In the Beginning
Love one another	Worship Prayer and Ritual
Cyberclass Books 1,2,3,	
A time to Live	

These books are used to help the student understand the Gospel and the challenge of living it. In conjunction with the textbooks, a variety of additional resources are used. Because of the evolving nature of Religious Education, textbooks are constantly being reviewed and upgraded.

Guest Speakers

Guest speakers are invited to the school to share their personal experiences on a variety of social topics, thus providing understanding of their Christian education for students. Please see the school policy on Visiting Speakers.

Class Periods

Transition year student have one class period a week. All other year groups have two class periods per week.

Facilities and Resources

- A variety of resources can be availed of by teachers within the school. These include magazines (The Gate, Face Up), photocopies, audio visual materials (DVD's, videos and appropriate I.T. sites).
- Resources are stored in Room E2 and the Chaplain's Office and are available to relevant teachers. These resources are updated by the Religious Education Department on a continuous basis.
- Each class is allocated at least one class period per week in the prayer room. A variety of activities take place including prayer and reflection, liturgical services, meditation and experiential learning.
- We, in Boherbue Comprehensive School, encourage students to participate in experiential learning through areas such as social awareness in Transition Year and the Lourdes Pilgrimages. The students engage in a variety of charitable works, for example, St. Vincent de Paul Christmas Food Appeal, Trócaire Fast and Emergency Appeals.

Non- Participation in Religious Education

Religious Education plays a pivotal role in the holistic development of the student and is a core subject in Boherbue Comprehensive School. The Principal outlines to Parent(s)/Guardian(s) of incoming students the role and status of Religious Education in the school on the annual open night. We encourage all students to participate in Religious Education emphasising that the school R.E. curriculum is a subject for 'all religious faiths and none.'

There may be occasions where the Parent(s)/Guardian(s) wish to withdraw a student from the class. This request must be directed to the Principal in writing and an effort will be made to address the issue.

However, it may not be possible for the school to provide for supervision of the student outside of the classroom and students will be required to remain in the classroom. The spiritual and moral development of the student must still be met. As this is the allocated time for attendance at Religious Education, students of other faiths or of no faith are required to use this time to engage in reading that will contribute to their spiritual/moral development. Parents / Guardians are requested to state which religion the student is practicing, if any, and to specify which books they are happy for their son/ daughter to study.

This time may not be used for the study of any other subject matter or for the completion of homework.

Participation in Liturgical Celebrations

Each year there are occasions where we come together as a school community to mark times of significance. These include November Mass, Christmas Carol Service, Ash Wednesday and Lenten Masses as well as other occasions such as the bereavement of a member of the school community. Students who do not wish to be involved in Liturgical Celebrations during the school year must provide a written note signed by their parents/ guardians in their diaries on the morning of the celebration. They will remain in the canteen where supervision will be provided.

Participation in Retreats

Retreats are an important part of the Religious Education programme in Boherbue Comprehensive School. To go on a retreat is a very special event in a person's life. It is an opportunity to search, to explore, to open one's heart and mind to be touched by God. It can be a wonderful, enriching experience, to move away for a time from the hustle and bustle of

school and everyday life - an opportunity to enhance the spiritual, emotional and social development of students. Students are charged a small sum to defray the costs. This is waived in needy cases. School rules apply regardless of the venue. All students are encouraged to participate in the retreats however participation is not mandatory. Any student who chooses not to participate on the day is expected to attend classes as normal.

Sudden Death or Trauma

In the event of the sudden death of a student or staff member, there is an appropriate prayer service and a sacred space is created in an appropriate location. This will include a photo of the deceased and a book of condolences. Staff and students will be invited to pay their respects on the day. Mass will be celebrated for the deceased, attended by staff and students. Relatives are also invited to attend. A prayer service is celebrated on the first anniversary of the death. In the event of the bereavement being an active staff member a photograph of the deceased will be placed in the staffroom on the first anniversary- with the agreement of the family. We will be guided by our Critical Incident Policy on such an occasion.

Outreach Programmes

Reflection on local and global problems in Boherbue Comprehensive School is encouraged through: Pilgrimages to Lourdes, participation in the Trócaire 24 hour Fast and fundraising for various charities and local fundraisers.

Parental and Parish Involvement

Schools are most successful in achieving their religious goals when the school, home and parish mutually reinforce each other. This is achieved in Boherbue Comprehensive School in the following ways:

- Information is available in the R.E. room with the aims, objectives and content of R.E. programme on the Open Night..
- Parental involvement in all Religious Education activities is welcome, in liaison with staff.
- The local clergy are actively involved as much as possible in our liturgies throughout the school year.
- Students are prepared to read at weekend masses
- Transition year students take part in Céilúradh na nÓg Project, which links students with parish work celebrated at diocesan level.

Inclusion of Students of Different Faiths

How we respond to international students of various faiths reflects our understanding of what it means to be a multi denominational school with a Christian ethos.

The school's policy on denominational religious instruction is built on the following principles:

- The school welcomes students from all and no religious persuasions.
- The school respects the religious convictions and traditions of all its students.

These principles are reflected in the following practices:

- As our curriculum is aimed towards a multi denominational school body, our religious education classes facilitate students of different faith.
- The various faiths are studied in our school and we encourage those of different faiths to share their experiences of their faith with others.
- There is a provision made in liturgies for those who are of a minority faith in consultation with parents/ students of different faiths and they are always encouraged to participate in whatever way they feel appropriate.
- Leaders of their communities are welcome to participate in various liturgies.

Inclusion of Students with Special Educational Needs

In line with its Christian ethos, Boherbue Comprehensive School aims to support all students with special educational needs in accessing the Religious Education Curriculum. This is achieved through differentiated teaching methods and liaison between class teachers and learning support/ resource teachers on an informal, regular basis.

Monitoring and Review of Policy

The Religious Education department will monitor policy implementation.

At the end of two years, the Religious Education department will meet to evaluate the success of the policy implementation.

This policy will come into effect on 16 April 2018

It will be reviewed formally after two years.

P. Fawcett