

St. Mary's College Dundalk



Religious Education Policy

Approved by BOM 24th October 2016

Section One: Mission, Vision and Aims

Mission Statement

St Mary's College is a Catholic secondary school under the patronage of the Marist Fathers. The primary aim of the College 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 College, 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 College

- A Catholic College 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 College: 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.

Religious Education Policy Rationale

This policy allows us the opportunity to reflect on, explore and articulate what it means to be a Marist College. 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 College in this Marist tradition in third millennium Ireland.

Religious Education 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 College.

Section Two: Personnel, Programmes and Practice

Religious Education Co-ordinators

- Briege Kelly will hold this position for the school year 2016-17.
- Rosie Reynolds Co-ordinates the 6th year Religious Education programme.

Chaplaincy Services

At present Ms. Rosie Reynolds provides the Chaplaincy services in St. Mary's College.

- 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 members of the Religious Education department. In this role the Chaplain liaises with all teachers, Year Heads, Student Support Teams, other staff, the Marist Education Authority (MEA), the diocesan advisor and local parishes in relation to faith formation.
- With the RE Department, the Chaplain helps organise and celebrate liturgical events in the College.
- The Chaplain has a role in the Colleges Student Support Services
- The Chaplain has a caring, supportive and affirmative roles in working with students, their Parents / Guardians and other members of the College community.

Religious Education Meetings

- The Religious Education department have meetings on a regular basis to discuss, evaluate and plan the RE programme and religious activities. .
- The 1st year Religious Education teachers and Chaplain have meetings at the beginning of the academic year to organise the 1st year mass.

Religious Education Programmes

- Three periods are allocated to religion per week from 1st year through to 5th year, with a two hour block of RE on Wednesday mornings for 6th years.
- A non-exam Religious Education Programme is followed at Junior and Senior Cycle.
- These programmes are in the Religious Education Subject Department Plan.

Students opting out of R.E. classes

Religious Education is a core subject on the College curriculum and an integral part of the ethos of the College. 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 / Guardians or against their own wishes once they turn 18 years of age. However withdrawal from Religion class needs to be negotiated in a meeting between College management and Parents / Guardians. The agreed decision must be confirmed in writing to the Principal. Any student's withdrawn from RE classes will be supervised by Parents / Guardians at the relevant times.

Staff Support and Development

- R.E. teachers and Chaplain 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.
- It is College policy to allow teachers to attend in-service training when available.
- The Marist Education Authority and Diocesan Advisor support the College's Religious Education department in their work.

Financial support

There is no allocated budget set out for R.E. Financially, R.E. is supported by College funding that includes:

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

Induction programme for newly qualified / appointed teachers of Religion

- New personnel meet the R.E. department at the beginning of the academic year and are introduced to team members and informed of the College's R.E. programmes and activities.
- Regular R.E meetings provide opportunities for new members to share experiences or concerns.
- Informal support among the R.E. department in general is ongoing.

Faith Formation and the Liturgical Year

The Catholic liturgical seasons are marked in the College in a variety of ways.

- To foster an attitude of welcome to all it may also be appropriate to acknowledge the major feasts of other traditions.
- Daily Morning Prayer is delivered to the whole College community over the PA system.
- Staff meetings always begin with an opening prayer / reflection.
- Marist Feast days are celebrated by students attending Masses in St. Mary's Church.
- During Lent Mass is celebrated on a daily basis at lunchtime in St. Mary's Church.
- Provision is made for Reconciliation Services for all students during Advent and Lent.
- The Religious Education department in the College plan a range of activities around Catholic Schools Week.
- Mass is celebrated on Holy days where school attendance is compulsory.

Inclusion in Religious Education

- 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 College in the Catholic tradition we are a caring College community that promotes inclusiveness and mutual respect.
- The Religious Education programmes delivered in the College 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.
- In the College, 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.
- Student uniform – No student or staff member should be prevented from wearing a religious symbol or garment in accordance with their tradition, for example the hijab for Muslim girls and the turban for Sikh boys. Freedom of religious expression is a basic human right and is in keeping with the Catholic understanding of its identify as being Universal Church. On the other hand the wearing of a full veil over a girl's face (niqab, for example is a more challenging issue. It would be unsatisfactory for a Teacher not be able to see and engage properly with a student whose face was covered. The full veil on girls in Irish schools is a rare enough occurrence and as such may need to

be negotiated between the Parents / Guardians and the Principal. If a female Principal / Deputy Principal or teacher is meeting with a female student or mother who is fully veiled in the niqab, it is reasonable that no man will enter the room during the meeting.

NB any difficulty with uniform needs to be resolved before the student is admitted. One of the advantages of meeting Parents/ Guardian of incoming students upon enrolment is the opportunity to make clear that full uniform includes the College crest, which may include a cross or other Christian symbols.

Section Three: Monitoring and Review

- The RE Staffing List is updated at the beginning of each academic year.
- A Religious Education Report is submitted to the Board of Management at the end of each academic year.

Signed: _____

Chairperson, Board of Management, St. Mary's College

Dated: _____