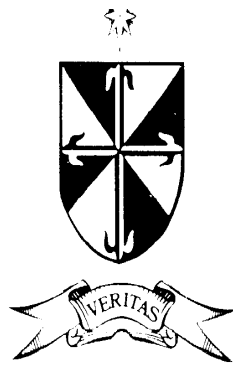


Dominican College
Sion Hill



Towards a Policy on Religious
Education.

May 2011

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Section 1 – Roles and responsibilities.

Roles and responsibilities – Scope of the policy.

As a Catholic School, this religious education policy will impact on the whole school community. The scope will reach:

Board of Management

- To approve the policy 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 a Catholic school, the hope is that the whole staff embraces and safeguards the ethos of the school.
- To support 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.

Pastoral Care Personnel (Class Tutors/ Guidance Counsellor)

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

Parents/ Guardians

- To support the Religious Education Programme.
- To facilitate the faith formation of their children.

Students

- To participate in the Religious Education Programme and to cultivate an openness to other religious traditions.

Section 2 – Context.

Mission Statement

Dominican College Sion Hill aims to help each student achieve her full potential academically, spiritually, physically, emotionally and socially in a happy and safe environment.

Vision of a Catholic School

Inspired by the vision of St. Dominic this school

- Seeks to live by Gospel values.
- Recognises the dignity of each individual.
- Has a special concern for the poor and the under-privileged.
- Is challenged to develop a curriculum which promotes the harmonious growth of the whole person.
- Contributes to the building of the local community.
- Works for peace and justice in society.

The motto of “**Veritas**” inspires the Dominican ethos. Dominican education is concerned with the education of the whole person. Within the school community we share our search for truth about God, the world, ourselves and our eternal destiny. We encourage respect, responsibility, initiative, personal growth and leadership in our school community.

A guiding aim of the religion department is to foster an understanding and critical appreciation of the values – moral, spiritual, religious, social and cultural – which have been distinctive in shaping the Christian heritage, especially as developed within Irish culture, and which have traditionally been accorded respect in society.

Dominican college Sion Hill is a voluntary all girls Post Primary school. Dominican ethos for education and aims of this are as follows:

- To create an atmosphere of care and concern within a Christian context.
- To instil respect for people, environment, property and themselves.
- To guide them to good decision making skills.
- To encourage in our students a healthy respectful vision of life.

We are part of The **Le Cheile Trust**. The **Le Cheile Schools** Trust now comprises the schools of thirteen religious congregations. The aim of the trust is to carry on the legal, financial and inspirational role of the trusteeship that has, up to now, been done by individual congregations. It carries out the legal and inspirational role of trusteeship. This is a significant development in Irish education as the Catholic Church and the individual religious congregations renew and reformulate their commitment to Irish education.

The main objective of **Le Cheile** is the development of a vision of Catholic education and overseeing the implementation in the schools, encouraging preservation of key aspects of evangelical heritage of their founding congregation and to facilitate the opening of new schools if and where the need arises and resources permit.

Section 3 – Aims and Objectives,

As a Catholic school we are committed to the importance of formal religion and moral education. This policy allows us the opportunity to reflect on, explore and articulate what it means to be a Catholic school. 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 the Dominicans and the implications of what it means to be a Catholic school in this tradition in third millennium Ireland.

Aims of Religious Policy

- To contribute to the religious development of our students.
- To contribute to the spiritual and moral development of the student.
- 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 develop care for the weak, co-operation between students, justice and fair play towards all, respect for truth, 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 embrace those with special needs education.
- To encourage awareness of and respect for the faiths of others.
- To invite the student to respond to God through a variety of experiences including prayer and liturgy.

Goals of Religious Policy

- To ensure the status of Religion in the school.
- To promote the religious and overall development of the students.
- To appreciate the richness of religious traditions and to acknowledge the non-religious interpretation of life.
- To lead a greater degree of clarity in respect of aims, procedures and roles for RE in the school.
- To promote open, mutually respectful and inclusive attitudes among students of different social, ethnic and religious backgrounds and to encourage an awareness of ecumenism.

Section 4 – Curriculum and Resources

Staffing

Role of RE Co-ordinator

- Organise department meetings.
- Makes information available to all religion teachers.
- Review of Religion policy.

The RE department hold formal meetings, facilitated by management, are held at the beginning of the school year and subsequently one every half term – every six to eight weeks. Teachers of Junior and Senior cycle usually have separate meetings when it comes to course planning.

Aims of meetings

- Determining what to be taught at specific points during the year.
- Key learning skills or outcomes each group should achieve.
- To plan and prepare for religious events, the beginning of year mass, school carol service, reflection of Advent, Lent and preparation for Easter.

Curriculum and Resources

- 1st, 2nd and 3rd year students have 3 class periods a week.
- RE is taken as an exam student at Junior Certificate.
- Transition years have 2 Personal Development classes a week – focuses on religious issues, reflection, relationships, mental health and behaviour.
- Senior Cycle have 2 class periods a week – compulsory subject -not taken as an exam subject at Leaving Certificate.
- There is a designated quiet space/sacred space.

Junior classes are following the State Syllabus for Religious Education and Religious Education (non- exam syllabus) is offered for all Senior Cycle students. This approach promotes intellectual religious development and provides a concrete knowledge base at junior level and then helps to engage Senior students with the search for meaning and an awareness of what a commitment to a faith involves as they prepare to leave secondary education.

We are aware that the State Syllabus for Junior Certificate is based on 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. We work to provide students with opportunities to integrate faith with life and experience creative liturgical celebrations.

Junior Cycle Religion

Section A: Communities of Faith

1. Community
2. Communities at work
3. Communities of Faith and Leadership
4. Relationships between Communities of Faith

Section B: Christianity

1. The Context of Jesus' Birth
2. Evidence about Jesus
3. The person and Preaching of Jesus
4. The Death and Resurrection of Jesus
5. Faith in Christ

Section C: Major World Religions

1. Islam
2. Judaism
3. Hinduism
4. Buddhism

Section D: The Question of Faith

1. The situation of Faith today
2. The beginnings of Faith
3. The growth of Faith
4. The expression of Faith
5. Challenges to Faith

Section E: The Celebration of Faith

1. The world of ritual
2. Worship, Signs and Symbol
3. Worship as a response to mystery
4. Prayer

Section F: The Moral Challenge

1. Morality
2. Sources of Morality
3. Growing in morality
4. Religious morality in Action
5. Religious morality and State Law

Students complete a Junior Certificate religion project and Journal based on the prescribed titles given from The Department of Education

Throughout the Junior Certificate Course, students participate in regular reflections and meditation.

Senior Cycle Religion.

Main topics to be covered:

- Justice and peace.
- Searching of meaning.
- Concepts of God.
- Relationships and sexuality (see RSE plan/policy)
- Christianity.
- Religious conflict
- World religions.
- New religious movement – cults and sects.
- Morality- decision making, principles.
- Prayer.
- Meditation.
- Life and death –euthanasia.
- Religion and science.

Throughout senior cycle students also participate in regular reflections and meditation.

Textbooks:

First and Second Year: A Question of Faith by Lori Fields Whelan and Niamh Mc Dermott (Educo)

Third Year: All about Faith by Anne and Niall Boyle.

Fouth Year: Personal development course.

Fifth and Sixth Year: No textbook is used R.S.E. (Relationships and Sexuality) course is given. Focus on discussion on religious issues.

All students have a copy of the Bible.

Audio-visual/IT learning helps students to engage in areas of the course in an experimental way.

Visits to places of significance to topics being studied e.g. Mosque.

Assessment:

All students after completing three years Junior Certificate Course, sit the Junior Certificate Religious exam at the appropriate level.

1st and 2nd years sit in-house examinations in October, February and May.

Senior students do assignments and written work which is kept in folders/copies. If written homework is not given at Senior Cycle, students partake in reflective practice on material covered in class.

Section 5 – Staff support and Professional Development.

There is a commitment to continuous professional development through the following:

- Attendance of Religious in-services
- Diocesan advisors invited to school for course planning and methodologies.
- Teachers are part of the RTA – Religion Teachers Association of Ireland and are kept up to date on issues, publications, resources and events pertaining to R.E.
- Websites e.g. schooletos.ie.

Section 6 – Faith Formation and the Liturgical Year.

Retreats:

Retreats are spiritual experiences that recognise and acknowledge the human context of the students but go beyond this to the faith context. We offer retreat days to all year groups. All students are expected to attend for retreat days whether organised on or off campus. We try to have senior classes – 5th and 6th year leave the premises to go to a retreat centre e.g. Glendalough, and the junior classes remain in the school.

Quiet space.

There is a designated quiet space available to all religion classes. It is an area used for meditation, prayer and quiet reflection, which takes place in individual classes on a regular basis throughout the school year.

Mind, Body & Soul Committee

The Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson of this committee are 6th year prefects. There is also one representative from each year.

Prayer and Ritual

We recognise the importance of providing our students with experiences of prayer, ritual and liturgical experience. Religion teachers/ Liturgy Committee plan, prepare and carry out liturgical celebrations during the year.

There are additional liturgies for key events that may take place in any year such as deaths. There can be important unplanned events in the school which require a response and through rituals we respond to these events in a prayerful manner. We try and make provision for prayer, meditation, reflection, a listening ear, silence and above all we try to witness the love of God.

Liturgical Calendar

Date	Service
September	Mass to open Academic Year
November	Remembrance for those who have died – reflection on school intercom – remembrance tree.
December	Advent preparation.
December	Carol Service
February	Catholic Schools Week.
Lent	Mass and distribution of Ashes. Reflection and meditation.
Easter	
April	Remembering Catherine of Sienna
May	Graduation mass for Sixth Years.

This calendar represents the major liturgical events in the school and the continual occasions where prayer takes place either as year groups or whole school celebrations.

Parent(s) and Guardian(s).

We support and promote the fact that Parents/Guardians are the primary educators of their children. We do all we can to support parents and guardians in their role.

We meet parents/guardians at parent-teacher meetings and provide them with information on the aims, objectives and content of the R.E. programme. We welcome parents/guardians and invite them to attend liturgical celebrations where possible. We encourage parents/guardians coming to the school to discuss matters arising from R.E. within the school.

Parish/Diocese.

We encourage and promote contact with the local parishes. We are happy to see the diocesan advisors for religious education on their annual visit to the school. We encourage RE teachers to participate in diocesan inservice and resources provided are shared with RE staff in general.

Section 7– Inclusion of Students of Other Faith Traditions.

We are happy if we have the presence of students of other faiths in our school. We are committed to improving religious development and cultural awareness. We encourage students of different religions/cultures in the class group to inform us of their way of life in their religion (the student is asked if they are comfortable to participate in this activity). We welcome and encourage their contribution in religion class as promoting care, understanding, tolerance and respect both within the school and the wider community. The new Junior Certificate Religious Education Syllabus (NCCA, 2000) is a positive step forward in promoting understanding of other faiths as well as the Christian faith. This is a State Syllabus, to encompass all faiths and none.

Attendance at R.E. class.

R.E. plays a pivotal part in the holistic development of the student. Every student is expected to attend all RE classes. There may be occasions where parent(s)/guardian(s) wish to withdraw a student from class. This request must be directed to the Principal and then efforts will be made to deal with it. In such circumstances, students may be required to remain in the classroom as there is no provision for the supervision of students outside the classroom in these circumstances.

If parent(s)/guardian(s) insist on withdrawal from the classroom, responsibility for supervision of the student at such times lies with parent(s)/guardian(s). It is not possible for the school to provide for such supervision within the Department of Education and Skills staff allocation to the school.

Section 8– Process for Development and Review.

The RE Co-ordinator /Policy Co-ordinator will monitor policy implementation. The terms of reference are as follows:

- Prepare a short written report for the Board of Management and staff on the implementation of the policy at key stages – in addition be prepared to give an oral report.
- The report should examine the meeting of specific targets and timelines.
- It should also gather some qualitative reactions to the policy during implementation

Evaluation:

At the reporting stage the Board and in turn the staff should discuss any reactions, concerns and suggestions that may arise during implementation.

This policy has been ratified by the Board of Management on the _____20_

Review:

The policy will be reviewed at least twice in the first year and annually thereafter.

Signed _____(Chairperson)