

# **Coláiste Choilm Tullamore**



**Coláiste Choilm is a Voluntary Catholic Secondary School  
for boys under the Trusteeship of  
Bishop Thomas Deenihan of the Diocese of Meath.**

## **Religious Education Policy**

## **Scope of the Policy**

Coláiste Choilm is an all-boys Catholic secondary school with a strong Christian ethos. It is run by a Board of Management under the Trusteeship of Bishop Thomas Deenihan of the Diocese of Meath. This Religious Education Policy will impact on the whole school community. Support for and implementation of the Policy will come from a number of groups:

- Board of Management: to support the procedures of the Policy and ensure its effective implementation.
- Principal and Deputy Principal: to support the procedures of the Policy and ensure its effective implementation.
- School Staff: in a Catholic school, the expectation 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 ensure a high standard and effective delivery of Religious Education.
- Chaplains: to assist in the faith development of students.
- Pastoral Care Personnel (Class Teachers/Year-Heads/Guidance Counsellors): to monitor the effects of the policy and to provide support and guidance to the students.
- Parent(s)/Guardian(s): to support the Religious Education Programme in the school and facilitate the faith formation of their children.
- Students: to participate in the Religious Education Programme and to cultivate an openness to other religious traditions.

## **Mission Statement**

The Religious Education Policy is informed by the school's Mission Statement:

"To provide a caring Christian Education, in a community of pupils, staff, parents and management, where each individual is valued as a unique human being".

## **Ethos**

The ethos of Coláiste Choilm is to assist in the development of all aspects of the student, the spiritual, moral, intellectual, physical and social at all times guided by the Gospel values. In keeping with Catholic tradition, the school is guided by the teachings of Jesus Christ and the Gospel values. The school reflects these values in the day to day life of the school through Catholic religious celebration, iconography, statuary, and symbols. Parents, students and staff are all expected to respect this tradition.

### **Core Elements of a Catholic diocesan secondary school**

As a Catholic school, we at Coláiste Choilm are committed to the importance of both formal and informal religious and moral education. The characteristic spirit of our school is based on the core elements or characteristics that help to identify the unique qualities of our school as a Catholic faith community. The following are core elements or characteristics of a Catholic diocesan secondary school:

- Promoting the holistic development of each member of the school community including the spiritual, moral, emotional, social, intellectual, physical and human aspects;
- Striving to excel in teaching and learning both inside and outside the classroom;
- Creating a caring school community that celebrates its diversity and keeps partnership and inclusion at the centre of all of its activities;
- Encouraging effective leadership, especially Christian leadership, at all levels;
- Continuing the ministry of Jesus Christ through nurturing a faith community in the traditions of the diocese.

### **Aim**

The aim of Religious Education which plays an integral part in the curriculum and philosophy of Coláiste Choilm is to promote in each pupil a knowledge of the importance of faith and practice in everyday life, while adhering to the school ethos.

### **Staffing**

The aims of Religious Education are an integral part of our school ethos and school community and it is imperative that it is given the status it deserves. The appointment of qualified teachers, its priority on the timetable and the allocation of two class periods to each group confirms this importance. We strive to ensure all our Religion teachers are trained Catechists, teaching both at Junior and Senior Cycle. In addition, the school will support any teacher who wishes to gain further qualifications.

The Religious Education Co-ordinator is a rotating position among the qualified Religion teachers. The religion co-ordinator facilitates the planning, organising and administrative aspects involved in the smooth running of the R.E. Department. Meetings of the Religious Education Department are formalised so that all relevant teachers may communicate as a group on a regular basis. The aims of these meetings will be to consistently review practice in the light of the Policy.

## **Curriculum**

### Junior Cycle

The Junior Cycle Religious Education Programme is a core subject at 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> year levels and is an examination subject for two class periods per week. The textbook used at Junior Cycle is “A Question of Faith” by Niamh McDermott and Lori Whelan and the “Good News Bible” (School edition). These books are used to help the pupil understand the truth of the Gospel and the challenge of living it. In conjunction with the textbook, a variety of additional resources are used.

### Senior Cycle

Transition Year students will follow a programme which has been formulated by the Religious Education Department for two class periods per week. No formal textbook is used in Transition Year but resource materials are provided by teachers and pupils.

The Senior Cycle Religious Education Programme is a core subject at 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> year for two class periods per week, but is not an examination subject. Textbook for non-examination Religious Education is “Life Matters” by Niall Boyle. A modular system is in operation, and each module is designed by the respective teacher informed by the Catholic ethos and values of the school.

Religious Education is also offered as an optional examination subject at senior cycle. Textbooks used are from the Veritas series “Search for Meaning and Values” and “Faith Seeking Understanding”.

Religious Education classes are timetabled for all students and active participation is encouraged. Exclusion is only allowed with permission of the school management. We, at Coláiste Choilm, encourage students to participate in experiential learning through areas such as social awareness in Transition Year such as Gaisce, India Immersion Project and John Paul II awards. The students engage in a variety of charitable works, for example, a SVP Christmas Food Appeal. Guest speakers are also invited to the school to share their personal experiences on a variety of social topics, thus providing students an understanding of their Christian education in action.

### Oratory

Every effort is made to allocate at least one class period per week in the Oratory. A variety of activities take place including prayer and reflection, liturgical services, meditation and experiential learning.

As student wellbeing is such an important part of the Christian ethos at Coláiste Choilm, Oratory time promotes the holistic, reflective and spiritual development of all students.

## **Record Keeping Procedures**

All minutes from Religious Education Department meetings are filed in the Religious Education Subject Planning folder which is stored in the staffroom. A shared folder has been set up so that the Religious Education team can share and store resources.

### **Assessment Techniques**

Students are assessed regularly on a formal and informal basis. The Religion Department is committed to the whole school approach and will endeavour to implement the Literacy and Numeracy Targets where applicable.

### **Communication**

Activities and features pertinent to the Religious Education Programme are communicated to students through the school newsletter, through the school website, in classes and on the Religious Education notice board.

### **Budget**

The Board of Management decides on the Religious Education budget annually.

### **Chaplaincy Services**

The Board of Management works positively to ensure chaplaincy services are available to the school.

### **Retreats**

It is school policy that retreats are encouraged and promoted. Retreats are supported by the Religious Education Programme in so far as they meet the needs of the students.

### **Prayer**

Prayer is an integral part of Religious Education in the school. Each morning, assembly begins with a prayer/reflection. Similarly, other meetings in the school commence with a prayer, for example, staff meetings. Students are given the opportunity to actively participate in prayer, meditation and reflection.

### **Liturgy**

A variety of liturgical and para liturgical worship takes place throughout the year. Such occasions may include:

- Opening of year Masses.
- Sacrament of Reconciliation.
- Lenten and Easter Liturgies – distribution of ashes etc.
- Graduation Service.
- Prayer Room Liturgy
- Training of Eucharistic Ministers

In exceptional circumstances such as bereavements pertaining to the school, Masses and prayer services may be held. The importance of Liturgical events is promoted and the whole school/staff is invited to participate in such events.

### **Parents(s)/Guardian(s)**

Parent(s)/Guardian(s) are informed of the aims, objectives and content of Religious Education Programmes by means of:

- Attendance of Religious Education teachers at the parent/teacher meetings,
- Open Night presentations,
- School website and social media,
- Student journal.

### **Social Awareness**

Over the years, the school has had an amicable relationship with the local parish and community as well as surrounding parishes. As part of the Transition Year Social Placement Programme many of our students are actively involved with local community organisations, which promotes awareness of social justice amongst the student body.

Action Aid Programmes include the India Immersion Project which occurs bi-annually. Preparation for this project is ongoing so that over a two-year period, the students become aware of the social injustices and poverty that exist outside Ireland.

Students are actively involved in fundraising and other charitable works which benefit the under privileged in our own society.

### **Parish**

The school is situated in Tullamore Parish and links with the parish are actively encouraged.

### **In-Service and Professional Development**

The Chaplain attends meetings with the Diocesan advisors. Religious Education department members are members of Religion Teachers' Association of Ireland (RTAI) which provides support for learning, spirituality and resources for teaching. It also provides the team with resources to help celebrate the Liturgical Year.

### **Roles and Responsibilities**

The development of the Religious Education Policy was undertaken by a task group drawn from the staff, Parents' Council, Management and members of the Board of Management. The Policy is implemented by the Religious Education team, the Religious Education Coordinator and supported by the staff.

The monitoring and reviewing of the Religious Education Policy will be carried out by the Board of Management.

### **Support Systems**

A system of support is in place in the school. This consists of Board of Management, the Diocesan advisors, school Chaplain and priests in the Parish.

### **Ratification of policy**

This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on 25<sup>th</sup> February 2020. The plan will be implemented by the teachers and supported by the Board of Management from 25<sup>th</sup> February 2020.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Chairperson of Board of Management)

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Principal)

### **Review of policy**

This Religious Education policy is reviewed in compliance with the Board of Management's policy for the cyclical review of all school policies as set out in The School Plan.