



DOMINICAN COLLEGE MUCKROSS PARK

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION POLICY

(Ratified: September 8th 2015.)

Our Vision

To create a progressive learning environment of the highest quality where our students grow to become independent, respectful and caring women of integrity who live by Christian values and Dominican principles.

Our Mission

To provide our students with an education that in the spirit of St Dominic:

- recognises and responds to the unique needs and abilities of each individual student
- encourages the development of positive, respectful and inclusive relationships
- challenges each student to speak and act with honesty and integrity.

Religious Education Policy

As a Catholic school within the Dominican tradition this RE policy will impact positively on the whole school community having implications for:

- The Board of Management who will approve the policy and ensure its implementation.
- The senior leadership team who will actively support the effective implementation of the policy.
- The whole staff who share in the task of preserving and promoting the ethos of the school and who support the cross curricular nature of Religious Education.
- The teachers of Religious Education who ensure the high standard and effective delivery of Religious Education in the school and who are charged in a particular way with the task of faith formation and the spiritual development of the pupils.
- The chaplain who assists in the faith development and spiritual formation of the students.
- Pastoral care personnel who provide support and guidance for the students.
- Parents and guardians who support the ethos of the school and facilitate the faith formation of their children.
- The students who actively participate in the RE programme as a key element of their holistic education.

The Vision of the Catholic School

We are a Christian, Roman Catholic School in the Dominican Tradition. Inspired by the vision of St Dominic, we are committed to handing on the Gospel and its values and reflecting this in the liturgy and life of the school. We emphasise the dignity of each individual and encourage a commitment to care for the poor, and to working for peace and justice. A guiding aim of the religion department is to foster an understanding and critical appreciation of the values – spiritual, moral, religious, social and cultural – which have been distinctive in shaping the Christian heritage, especially as it has developed within Irish culture. We recognise the common heritage which we hold together with all world religions. In harmony with our motto, Veritas, “Dominican schools seek to create a community permeated with the gospel spirit of freedom and love in constant search for truth.”

As the spiritual and moral development of each pupil is integral to her development, these Gospel values are central to the pupil’s successful and inclusive participation in the school.

The school expects the pupil’s participation in the Liturgy and the Religious Education programme in the school. Participation in the long-standing traditions of one’s faith fosters respect for other traditions.

The Aims of RE in the School

- To foster the growth of faith at a personal and communal level, especially through understanding of and participation in prayer and liturgy.
- To teach students to think, research, reason, reflect and act in the light of Gospel values
- To provide an intellectual framework for reflecting on life decisions and to encourage students to give witness to the integration of faith and life.

The Context in which the Policy operates:

The work of Faith Formation is through invitation, not coercion. It recognises that individuals are at different places in their personal faith journeys.

- Some students from other faiths and from other Christian denominations will have enrolled in the school. Their different traditions will be respected. They will be encouraged to grow in knowledge and appreciation of their own traditions.
- Others students may come to the school with limited ability to engage with the spiritual. The general programme of the school promotes a human development that focuses on the emotional and aesthetic, thus enabling the young person to experience God at a deep and spiritual level.
- Other students may come to the school with limited knowledge of the Catholic tradition, or with low levels of familiarity with Catholic liturgy and rituals. In this situation, the school helps them to develop that knowledge. Pupils are encouraged to reflect on their life experiences in the light of Christian revelation and invited to discipleship through a personal faith commitment.
- Still others will come to the school having already made a significant commitment to their faith. They will come from supportive home and parish communities. The school seeks to give special support to this group, and to help them explore, in a deeper way, the commitment of discipleship. (The Le Chéile Charter p.7)

Staffing

All teachers of R.E. are required to possess qualifications in the subject that satisfy the Teaching Council and the Diocesan authorities.

Curriculum

The Junior Cycle Religious Education Programme is a core subject at 1st, 2nd and 3rd year levels and is a state examination subject.

Transition Year pupils follow a programme which has been formulated by the Religious Education Dept. in conjunction with the Transition Year co-ordinator. The focus of Transition Year is social outreach and active citizenship, fulfilling the Christian vision of service and justice.

The Senior Cycle Religious Education Programme is a core subject at 5th and 6th year. Leaving Certificate Religious Education is also available as an optional choice for the state examination.

Meditation is available to all students.

Children with Special Educational Needs

Teachers of Religious Education use differentiation within the classroom to ensure that all students engage in the course. In Learning Support Classes the teacher adapts methodologies to cater to the needs of the students. All students participate fully in the RE Programme.

Child Protection Guidelines.

The Child Protection Guidelines are adhered to in all areas of the R.E. programme. Our Child Protection Policy is available from our website: www.muckcrossparkcollege.com

Liturgical Celebrations

The school reflects the liturgical life of the church. The school calendar includes (but is not limited to) the following:

- Opening of Year Mass.
- November Remembrance of the Dead.
- First Year Advent Wreath Ceremony.
- Advent services.
- Penitential services.
- Christmas Carol Service.
- Holocaust Memorial Day.
- Lenten services.
- Irish Mass.
- Easter Reflections and Prayers
- Graduation Mass.

In **exceptional circumstances**, such as bereavements, Masses and prayer services are celebrated.

Retreats

Retreats are provided on an annual basis for all of the pupils in the school. The school expects full participation by pupils. Retreats are recognised as part of the overall holistic educational experience and as such are supported by the management and staff of the school.

Where possible, we try to have Sixth Years leave the premises to go to a Retreat Centre, for example, Glendalough, and other classes remain in the school.

Outreach Programmes

Dominican College, Muckross Park strongly promotes student involvement in outreach activities. These benefit the needs of the locality, address justice and peace issues, promote ventures to aid the Developing World, encourage concern for the environment and facilitate faith development e.g. accompanying the Dublin Diocesan Pilgrimage to Lourdes, work for and with Saint Vincent de Paul, Barnardos, ISPCC, The Peter McVerry Trust, The Transition Year Social Work Experience Week, An Gaisce Awards (community involvement) and so on.

Fifth Year students are invited to apply for positions as Ministers of the Eucharist. This role requires a deep faith commitment and active participation in the Eucharist. They must attend training sessions to prepare for the role. They are commissioned at the Opening of the School Year Mass to serve in the school community and are available to serve as Ministers of the Eucharist in their local parishes.

Parental involvement

Parents are informed of the aims, objectives and content of Religious Education Programmes by means of:

- Parent/Teacher Meetings.
- Induction Meetings, where emphasis is laid on the ethos of the school.
- Newsletters/mailings/school website etc.

There are also opportunities for involvement through participation in liturgies (Opening of the Year Mass, Graduation Mass), Outreach programmes, guest speakers, etc

Inclusion of students of other faiths

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 and share with us their way of life in their religion. 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. As a Catholic school within the Dominican tradition, every student is expected to attend all R.E. 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 find a solution. 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.

Conclusion

The implementation of this policy will be evaluated on an ongoing basis by discussion in the Religion Department meetings throughout the year (as well as, where appropriate, general staff meetings).

This policy was ratified and adopted by the Board of Management on September 8th 2015.

Signed: _____
Chairperson of Board of Management

Signed: _____
Principal

Date: _____

Date: _____

Date of next review: *September 2017*