

Our Lady of Mercy College

Beaumont



Religious Education & Faith Formation Policy

1. Mission:

To provide a holistic education in the Catholic tradition under the CEIST Trusteeship.

2. Mission Statement:

The core value of Our Lady of Mercy College Beaumont is respect for all and the nurturing of individual potential, academically, spiritually and culturally as a member of the school community and in the spirit of the Mercy Ethos.

3. Vision:

A compassionate and just society inspired by the life and teachings of Jesus.

4. Rationale:

Our Lady of Mercy College is a CEIST school. We engage in the formation of the *whole* person by assisting in the harmonious development of the spiritual, intellectual, moral and social development of each pupil.

- We endeavour to create for the school community an atmosphere enlivened by the Gospel Spirit of freedom and charity and relating all human culture to the good news of salvation, so that the Light of Faith will enlighten the knowledge that students gradually gain of the world, of life and of humankind.
- We cultivate the intellect with unremitting attention, promote a sense of values, and prepare the student for life.
- We encourage our students to weigh moral matters with an upright conscience and to embrace them by personal choice.

- We prepare our pupils to take part in social life, by proper instruction in necessary and useful skills so that they can become actively involved in various community organisations.

5. What is Catholic Education?

In keeping with the ideals of Catholic Education (see appendix) as a lifelong process of human growth and development, Our Lady of Mercy College promotes the dimensions of home, school and parish working together with the common purpose of forming mature persons in the image and likeness of Christ.

We seek to educate pupils in their every dimension according to the Gospels and nurture not only the transformation of the individual human lives of our pupils, but also, through them, the society which they will help to build.

6. Aims of RE & Faith Formation in this school:

The general aim of Religious Education is to awaken people to faith and to help them throughout their lives to deepen and strengthen that faith. The fundamental principles governing the Religious Education of students in this school may be stated as follows:

- To contribute to the revelation and communication of God's love.
- To invite the student to respond to God with love and gratitude through a variety of experiences including prayer and liturgy.
- To respect the student as a person.
- To engage with each student's personal and social development.
- To encourage the student to ask the key questions humankind has always asked.
- To deepen the appreciation and understanding of the Catholic tradition.
- To foster and deepen the student's faith.
- To contribute to the student's religious and moral development.
- To help the student tell her own story and the story of her faith community.
- To promote open, mutually respectful and inclusive attitudes among students of different social, ethnic and religious backgrounds and highlights ecumenism / *interfaith dialogue* as an essential feature of modern Christianity.
- To animate affective, active and cognitive religious experience.
- To embrace those with special education needs.
- To facilitate authenticity, commitment and responsibility on the part of the student and the teacher.
- To acknowledge its intergenerational character.
- To promote awareness of the reality that faith formation belongs to the whole school community.
- To support and encourage parents in exercising their responsibility for the spiritual growth and faith formation in partnership with the school and their parish communities.
- To provide an atmosphere of spiritual awareness for a school faith community which will enable its students to become catalysts for social transformation.

7.

Curriculum

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Religious Education is a core subject in this school for all students (*see Admissions Policy*). All *Junior Cycle* classes follow the State NCCA Syllabus for Religious Education in accordance with the Liturgical calendar of the Catholic Church and the *Wellbeing Programme*.

This approach promotes intellectual religious development, provides a concrete knowledge base and gives students a tangible goal on a par with other disciplines.

The General Aims of this Syllabus are as follows:

- To foster 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 continue to have an impact on personal lifestyle, interpersonal 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.

We are guided in our teaching by ‘Guidelines for the Faith Formation and Development of Catholic Students studying the State Syllabus’ (*Irish Catholic Bishops’ Conference*). 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 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.

As well as all senior students taking Senior Cycle Religious Education (SCRE) Religious Education is offered as an optional subject at Leaving Certificate (LCRE) and like other optional subjects may be subject to timetabling restrictions.

8.

Assessment:

Students are assessed *throughout* each term through class tests and project work. Formal, common exams are given to all R.E. classes at the end of the Christmas and Summer terms. In addition, Junior *Cycle* and Leaving Certificate classes sit mock exams in February.

9. _____

Homework:

Homework is given in all R.E. classes. This may take the form of written, oral work or I.C.T. presentations.

10. **Timetabling:**

All Junior Cycle classes have 4 periods per week.
Transition year have 3 periods per week.
SCRE have 3 periods per week.
LCRE have 4/5 periods per week as per option block.

In the case of SCRE classes where possible are timetabled simultaneously to allow for team teaching, visiting speakers and the flexibility needed for curriculum and faith based projects, Relationship & Sexuality Education (RSE) modules are also delivered.

11. **Resources & Textbooks:**

Textbooks are agreed yearly by the R.E. department based on their suitability, adherence to the Catholic tradition and cost.

Each classroom has access to a computer with internet access. *All* R.E. classrooms have data projectors. There is a computer room and a library, which can be used by all students. Photocopying facilities are available for all teachers. *Tablets are available for use.*

Sacred spaces are essential for faith development. There is an Oratory containing the Blessed Sacrament and a prayer room for meditation. Rooms all contain Christian icons to reflect the Catholic ethos of the school.

In as far as it is possible places of prayer for other faiths may be facilitated. There is a dedicated chaplain's room

12.

Budget:

There is a budget for R.E. as per each subject in the school. Students are *asked* to pay a contribution for R.E. annually. The budget, in as far as is possible, reflects the needs of the department in the passing on of faith in a Catholic school, e.g. requirements for RE Department, liturgical events as well as subject needs.

13. Staffing:

All teachers of R.E. are required to hold qualifications in the subject that satisfy the Board of Management and the Teaching Council.

14. Training & Staff Development:

The role of R.E. co-ordinator is rotated among the R.E. teachers yearly.

Department meetings are held *monthly* and informally throughout the *school year*.

The management of the school encourages attendance at in-service and facilitates this in as far as is possible.

All members of the R.E. dept. are encouraged to be members of the R.T.A.I.

15. Support Services:

The RE dept has the support of:

- PDST
- R.T.A.I.
- CEIST
- The Diocesan Advisors
- Junior Cycle RE

16. Liturgy:

Catholic religious events are observed and celebrated throughout the liturgical year. Mass is celebrated at the significant church occasions as well as some Fridays in the school – in as far as the local clergy are available.

Year Group masses are held. The school marks the opening and closing of the school year with a community mass.

Ministers of the Eucharist are inducted from the student body at the Christmas Mass and serve Beaumont Hospital.

All classrooms, prayer rooms and public spaces contain the Cross and other Christian icons. This is central to the public acknowledgement of our catholic status.

There is a religion prefect that assists and supports the R.E. dept in the organisation of liturgical events.

17. Chaplaincy:

The local parish of Beaumont provides a priest to meet the needs of the school- in so far as they are available.

A dedicated room is available for Chaplaincy and a budget is made available for mass stipends etc..

18. Retreats/Pilgrimages/Days of Reflection:

Retreats/Days of Reflection are held annually and for each year group. A full day is given to each year group.

Where outside retreat teams are employed they must have relevant qualifications and Garda vetting.

Participation by all students is mandatory.

The school staff supports the giving of retreats/days of reflection as a core Catholic event in this school.

Retreats are subsidised, in as far as is possible, by the school (*See Retreats Policy*).

19. Justice & Peace:

As educators we acknowledge our role in the fostering of Justice and Peace as well as encouraging an attitude of social awareness for the betterment of society.

This is developed through the student council and prefect system as well as R.E. and C.S.P.E. classes.

The school community supports many charities, national and local, e.g. Trocaire and S.V.P. by fundraising as well as Amnesty International.

The Transition Year Programme in particular promotes social justice through its participation in *charity* work and *through* work experience where students are encouraged to part take in volunteer work, e.g. with Autism Ireland and the Irish Hospice Foundation.

20. Parents & Guardians:

Parents/Guardians are the primary educators. We support them in their role. Parents are informed prior to entry of all policies and curricula. The school calendar is sent out at the beginning of each term informing them of all events. Parents are encouraged to support their children in all school projects.

21. Parish/Diocese:

The school retains strong links with the local parish and primary schools. Liturgical events are celebrated in the parish church and for example TY students partake in John Paul 2 Awards in local parishes.

22. Diocesan Advisor (DA)/CEIST:

Meetings of the R.E. teachers with the D.A.s and representatives of CEIST are facilitated by the school management. Teachers are facilitated, in as far as is possible, to attend in-service meetings.

23. School Leadership/Management/Staff:

There is ongoing support from CEIST, the Board of Management, Principal, Deputy Principal and staff as educators of Catholic students.

24. Relationship to other policies

All policies are informed by the school's Catholic/CEIST values. However, other policies which particularly reflect the school's Catholic ethos and its faith in action will include the school's Admissions Policy, Code of Behaviour, Suspension Policy, Expulsion Policy, Anti-Bullying Policy, Child Protection Policy, S.P.H.E. Policy, R.S.E. Policy, Pastoral Care Policy, Critical Incident Policy, Guidance Policy *Wellbeing programme* etc..

25. Success Criteria for Faith Formation

- Celebration of the Liturgical Year.
- Acknowledgement of the school being Catholic by displaying Catholic symbols *in sacred space area*.
- Participation in prayer in the school which may be facilitated via the intercom, school masses and/or at the commencement of class.
- The provision of and participation in School Retreats.
- By the use of the Oratory & Prayer Room by students, staff and visitors.
- Students showing a wiliness to undertake faith formation and social justice projects and to display these as appropriate.
- *Wellbeing is part of the Junior Cycle RE Programme.*

26. Monitoring Evaluation and Review

The Faith Development is a core value of this school, and therefore the implementation and ongoing effectiveness of this policy will require constant monitoring. Regular evaluation and review will take place.

- At the end of each year the R.E. Department evaluate the policy from their perspective as a team.
- The BOM have a three year review of all policies. A whole school review will take place with the inclusion of all the partners – Management, Staff, Students, Parents and, where possible, Parish representatives. This review of the policy will ensure that the ethos is indeed being effectively carried into the future by the whole school community.

Ratified by the BOM2020

Appendix

What is Catholic Education?

Catholic Education is a lifelong process of human growth and development. It is more than schooling. It begins in the home, continues in the school and matures through involvement with the Christian community in the parish. These three dimensions of home, school and parish must work together if Catholic education is to truly attain its goal of forming mature human persons in the image and likeness of Christ.

CEIST Charter p.6.

Catholic Education aims to help each student to develop his or her full potential as a human being. It will do so by preparing and disposing our pupils for this fullness of life, by enabling them to be people who are fully alive. Education means the development of the whole person. An education which makes no room to address the fundamental questions about the meaning of life could not be described as seeking such holistic development. By educating students in their every dimension according to the Gospel, Catholic schools seek to transform not only the individual human lives of our pupils, but also, through them, the society which they will help to build.

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