



## Ashbourne Community School Religious Education Policy

### Religious Education Policy of Ashbourne Community School

The 'General Directory for Catechesis' states that, when working with young people, content 'should be proposed in new ways which are open to the sensibilities and problems of this age group' (185). Thus, good religious education will acknowledge the context within which it takes place. It requires dialogue with the culture in which students grow and by which they are shaped. In the school community, where the dignity of each individual is respected, the role of *the teacher of religion* is to ensure that a pastorally caring, socially reflective, and religiously sensitive atmosphere permeates the daily life of the school. *The Education Act, 1998*, Section 9(d), notes the obligation placed on schools to "promote the moral, spiritual, social and personal development of students in consultation with parents, having regard to the characteristic spirit of the school".

For this work to be adequately done, home, school and parish communities must work together. (Please refer to the school mission statement) By working together, these communities help the students to develop the maturity of faith to see God's presence in the world and to develop the willingness to respond to it.

### Rationale

We are a multid denominational school. In exercising its general control over the curriculum and conduct of the School the Board shall ensure that there is religious worship and religious instruction for the pupils in the School except for such pupils whose parents make a request in writing to the Principal that those pupils shall be withdrawn from religious worship or religious instruction or both religious worship and religious instruction.

(ii) The religious worship attended by any pupil at the School and the religious instruction given to any pupil; shall be in accordance with the rites, practice and teaching of the religious denomination to which the pupil belongs.

However, the vast majority of the student population is of the Roman Catholic Tradition and this background has a strong influencing effect on our ethos.

We therefore:

- Endeavour to live by Gospel values
- Recognise the dignity of each individual
- Are challenged to develop a curriculum that promotes the harmonious growth of the whole person
- Contribute to the building up of the local community
- Work for peace and justice in society

**Aim of Religious Education in School in Ashbourne Community School:**

The general aim of Religious Education is to awaken people to their personal faith and spirituality, to help them throughout their lives to deepen and strengthen their beliefs. In Ashbourne Community School this is done in partnership with teachers, parents, Board of Management and the wider parish community.

**Curriculum**

While Religious Education in Ashbourne Community School is not a state examined subject, the school still follows the aims and objectives of the Junior Certificate Religion syllabus as outlined by the Department of Education, which is to *'provide students with a framework for encountering and engaging with the variety of religious traditions in Ireland and elsewhere'*.

*'In teaching the syllabus particular attention should be given to the overall aims:*

- *Fostering an awareness that the human search for meaning is common to all peoples, of all ages and at all times;*
- *Exploring how this search for meaning has found and continues to find expression in religion;*
- *Identifying 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, inter-personal relationships and relationships between individuals and their communities and contexts;*
- *Appreciating the richness of religious traditions and acknowledging the non-religious interpretation of life;*
- *Contributing to the spiritual and moral development of the student'. --(Department of Education, Religious Education, Junior Certificate Guidelines for Teachers)*

This is in accordance with the wishes of the Religious Patron of the school, the Bishop of Meath.

At senior level teachers will devise a course outline for their students.

Religion classes are of a mixed ability student cohort. Assessment techniques include; project work, debate, discussion, copy collection, class quiz and class tests.

Opportunities are provided for students to critically reflect on other faith communities and religions. It is the policy of the RE Department to arrange when and where possible, class trips to religious places of interest and worship.

The Religion teachers of Ashbourne Community School will annually review the textbooks used in class. Homework is given in accordance with the homework policy of Ashbourne Community School.

In accordance with the wishes of the Religious Patron of the school, the Bishop of Meath and in line with the Deed of Trust, each individual class in Ashbourne Community School receives three periods of religion per week.

**Resources**

Resources for the teaching of Religion in Ashbourne Community School include; a prayer room, television, video and DVD player, access to a computer and over-head projector in every class room. A photocopying facility is available to all religion teachers.

The prayer room is to be kept as a sanctuary of peace and tranquility for reflection and prayer. Every attempt will be made to keep the prayer room exclusively for the above purpose.

### Religious Instruction and Religious Worship

Ashbourne Community School is a multi-denominational school. On enrolling for Ashbourne Community School, parents indicate the enrollee's religion. It is expected that all students participate in Religious Education classes, as outlined by the N.C.C.A. White Paper in Education *ref. Societal and Individual Development through Education*. If a pupil seeks an exemption from attending religious instruction the following steps must be adhered to;

- A meeting between the student and class teacher.
- Written confirmation of parental / guardian consent, to the Board of Management, outlining clear and valid reasons for individual's exclusion from Religion class.
- For supervision purposes, the exempted student will remain in the religion classroom and complete personal study. Where this is not to the satisfaction of parents/ guardian, the student must leave the school grounds for the duration of the RE class and be in the supervision of a parent/ guardian for the duration of the class.

### Staffing

Teachers of Religious Education in Ashbourne Community School are expected to hold the relevant qualifications necessary to teach Religion. They should possess a degree in Theology / Religious Science plus a Higher Diploma in Education or its equivalent. This is the minimum qualification needed to teach Religion to any class in the school.

### Co-ordinator of Religious Education in Ashbourne Community School

Currently, in the absence of a post of responsibility for Religious Education in the school, the co-ordinating of the Religion Department will be a shared one, rotated on an annual basis.

### Religious Celebration

The liturgical seasons are celebrated by the school through masses, para-liturgies, meditations, reflections, assemblies etc. Significant seasons include; Advent, Christmas, Lent and Easter.

### Chaplaincy Services

The School Chaplain is the faith presence in the school community who is available to all students and staff. The Chaplain's non-disciplinary role in the school enables him/her to develop a relationship of trust with students, staff and parents. The Chaplain is committed to the teaching and values of Christ, acting on behalf of the Church and the school community and accompanying each student on their journey through life.

The Chaplain will be a professionally qualified person with responsibility for the co-ordination of specified activities associated with the Catholic faith in collaboration with others who also have designated pastoral responsibilities in the school community.

The Chaplain will be a full-time member of staff. S/he shall be nominated by the local Bishop and shall remain a member of the staff until the Bishop withdraws his/ her nomination. The Chaplain will participate fully in all activities which relate to the well being and development of the school, i.e. Critical Incident Plan. A significant role of the Chaplain will be to ensure that the characteristic spirit of the school as expressed in the school's mission statement finds practical expression in faith formation as well as pastoral, liturgical and outreach activities.

The Chaplain will be required to act collaboratively with all members of the school community and in particular with those who hold designated pastoral responsibilities relating to students, staff and members of the wider community connected with the school. Given the complex nature of the role and the inevitable over-lap involved, the Chaplain will work within agreed structural arrangements as outlined by the Principal. The Chaplain will be accountable to the Principal.

The Chaplain is a member of the Religious Department of the school. The Principal, together with the Chaplain shall make provision for religious worship and instruction of the pupils in the school, in accordance with the wishes of the parents and of the local Bishop.

The Chaplain in Ashbourne Community School will exercise his/her pastoral role:

- By personal contact with individual students
- By class contact
- Through religious worship
- By maintaining a lively interest in recreational, cultural and apostolic activities.
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#### Inclusion and Special Needs

As a multi-denominational school we welcome those of all faiths and none in to our school and encourage them to participate as fully as they can in the religious, social and cultural life of the school. To this effect, the RE department participates where possible and where appropriate in inter-cultural week every year. The RE department also recognises the various learning abilities of students and uses appropriate teaching strategies.

#### Liturgy

Liturgies and Para-liturgies are an integral aspect of school life and generally follow the Christian seasons. Liturgies are specially tailored to the school setting and the experiences of the students.

#### Parish / Diocese / In-service

The Religion Department will ensure that contact is maintained between the school and the parish of Ashbourne / Donaghmore through regular meetings with local clergy, both in and outside of the school and through attending meetings and social events in the parish.

The Religion Department will be facilitated to meet the Diocesan Advisor on his / her visit to the school. Religion teachers will be encouraged to attend Diocesan in-services and in-services related to the teaching of Religion.

This Religious Education Policy of Ashbourne Community School is open to an annual review.

**This policy has been ratified by the Board of Management of Ashbourne Community School at its meeting on Monday 3<sup>rd</sup> November, 2014(Ref. Meeting Nr. 208)**

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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**Chairperson**  
**Board of Management**  
**Ashbourne Community School**