



# Coláiste Pobail Bheanntaí

Seskin

Bantry,

Co. Cork.

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## *Religious Education Policy*

*Coláiste Pobail Bheanntaí*

*Bantry*

*Co Cork*

## **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

- THE SCOPE OF THE POLICY
- MISSION STATEMENT
- VISION OF THE SCHOOL
- AIMS, RATIONALE AND GOALS OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION
- STAFFING
- CURRICULUM AND RESOURCES
- STAFF SUPPORT AND DEVELOPMENT
- FAITH FORMATION AND THE LITURGICAL YEAR
- OUTREACH PROGRAMMES
- PARENTAL AND PARISH INVOLVEMENT
- INCLUSION
- POLICY MONITORING AND TIMEFRAME

### **The Scope of the Policy**

As a Community college under the Co-Trusteeship of the Diocese of Cork and Ross and the Cork County Vocational Educational Committee, 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 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 of *Coláiste Pobail Bheanntraí*, the hope 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 implement the policy.

To ensure a high standard and effective delivery of Religious Education.

**Local Clergy:**

To assist in the faith development of students.

**Pastoral Care Personnel (Class Tutors/ Year Heads/ Chaplain/ Guidance Counsellor):**

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

**Parents/ Guardians:**

To support the Religious Education Programme in the school and facilitate the faith formation of their children.

## **Students**

To participate in the RE programme and to cultivate an openness to other religious traditions.

## **Mission Statement**

*‘Ní neart go cur le chéile’*

In partnership, through a comprehensive curriculum, we aim to provide quality teaching and learning in the pursuit of excellence, to promote intellectual, spiritual and personal development in an atmosphere of respect thus enabling students to contribute positively to their community.

### **Vision Of School**

Coláiste Pobail Bheanntaí under the Co-Trusteeship of the Diocese of Cork and Ross and the Cork County VEC is committed to providing a high standard of intellectual, physical and spiritual education for the pupils in our care. While including pupils from all religious backgrounds, Coláiste Pobail Bheanntaí has a strong Christian ethos which permeates the life of the school. All aspects of the overall pastoral care within the school reflect a Christian caring attitude. Members of staff place great emphasis on offering support, being present for and being authentic with the pupils in order to show them the potential for their own growth and development.

The Christian ethos of the school is evidenced by the involvement by the staff in various fund-raising/ awareness raising activities which promote the work of local, national and global charities.

Many of our para liturgies are ecumenical in nature with the involvement of the clergy from the different Christian denominations in the Bantry area. Many of our liturgies in school reflect the richness of the Catholic traditions within the school.

### **Aims, Rationale and Goals Of Religious Education**

- To contribute to the religious / faith development of our students.
- To develop care for the weak; co-operation between pupils; 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/ for sacramental participation.
- To encourage our students to ask and seek answers to important questions.
- To provide opportunities for self-awareness, thinking, reflection, evaluation.
- To facilitate spiritual experiences.
- To prepare them for life as Christians in the world.
- To lead them to a more adult relationship with God.

### **Rationale**

As a community college under the Co- Trusteeship of the Diocese of Cork and Ross and the VEC, we are committed to the importance of formal religious and moral education. This policy allows us the opportunity to reflect on, explore and articulate what it means to be a

community college. It is our hope and privilege to harness the religious development of our students and to provide opportunities for them to know their God.

**Goals:**

- To ensure the status of RE in the school.
- To promote the religious and overall development of the students.
- To appreciate the richness of religious traditions and to provide a framework to encounter these traditions.
- To lead to a greater degree of clarity in respect of aims, procedures and roles for RE in the school.

**Staffing**

We consider Religious Education to be such an integral part of our school ethos and school community that it is imperative that we give it the status that it deserves. This means looking at the appointment and selection of qualified and suitable teachers and its place on the school timetable and allocation of class periods.

Our RE teachers, are qualified to teach Religious Education at both Junior and Senior Cycle. The Religious Education Co-ordinator receives all information which arrives by post pertaining to Religious Education. She shares this information with the Religion teachers and other staff members if relevant. The Coordinator in consultation with the other RE teachers recommends books to be placed on the book lists each year.

The lay chaplain in the school has an important role to play in the on-going promotion of RE in the school. As pastoral care giver he meets with as many of the pupils as is practical on a small group basis. Also he organises speakers to come to the school for various occasions and assists the local clergy in the planning of any liturgical services.

The local clergy provide chaplaincy services to the school as well as assisting the RE staff and whole school on ethos related activities.

The RE department meet as a department at the start of the school year (planning day). They also will meet on an informal basis throughout the school year in their own time.

Currently there is no formal induction practice for new RE personnel although the coordinator will meet with any teacher new to RE and assist them with curriculum, resources and any other issues.

### **Curriculum And Resources**

- a) The position of religious education on the curriculum of Coláiste Pobail Bheantraí is governed by the Model Agreement between Co Cork VEC and the Diocese of Cork and Ross. Junior Cycle pupils follow the junior cycle non-exam syllabus as well as maintaining links with the liturgical year. (See subject plan)
- b) Senior cycle pupils follow the curriculum framework for senior cycle.



- c) Junior Cycle students use *Know the Way* by Orla Walsh which may be supplemented by other resources such as worksheets, DVDs etc.
  - d) T Y, Pre-leaving classes and Leaving Cert classes will use a variety of resources.
  - e) We also give pupils experience of meditation and prayer services.
  - f) All students are expected, as in all other subject areas on our curriculum, to participate fully in RE classes. If any student does not wish to participate in RE then:-
    - i. a note signed by the student's parents/ guardians must be submitted to the Principal, where the contents of the note will be examined and a decision subsequently made in consultation with middle-management, the RE team and the parents/guardians.
    - ii. Students who are not participating in RE Class are to remain in the timetabled RE Classroom.
    - iii. Out of respect to those students who are studying RE in the classroom no homework is to be done by those students not participating in the RE Class.
- G. Coláiste Pobail Bheantraí will put strong emphasis on each student participating fully in all RE classes that he/she may have.

### **Staff Support and Development**

A system of support is in place in the school. This consists of the Board of Management, Principal, the Diocesan Advisor and local clergy.

Management supports the RE department by:

- employing qualified and suitable teachers of RE.
- providing adequate timetabled classes in RE.
- assisting in acquisition of resources for RE.
- facilitating/ assisting in planning meetings.
- meeting with Diocesan Advisor on an annual basis.
- facilitating/ assisting in promoting religious development of the students.
- Facilitating participation in RE services/ trips etc.
- Assisting/ meeting/ facilitating local clergy in providing RE/ Chaplaincy services to the school.

- Facilitating members of the RE department in attending in-service courses and/ or meetings with the Diocesan Advisor.
- Facilitating Diocesan Advisor in meeting with the staff to explain the importance of RE within the college.

As far as possible one member of staff is released to attend in-services and other meetings with Diocesan Advisor.

The Diocesan Advisor visits with the Department during the school year. The Diocesan Advisor also provides resources as well as help and advice on various issues that might arise.

### **Faith Formation and the Liturgical Year**

- a) Advent and Lent are marked with a display in the school canteen to reflect the season. Each year group will have lessons relevant to the particular season. In addition, there is a reconciliation service offered to the whole school during both Advent and Lent.
- b) The whole school gathers together for Reconciliation Services in Advent and Lent, and for Ash Wednesday (when appropriate). In November, prayer services for the Holy Souls are held on a class basis. Just before the Christmas Holidays, there is a Carol Service which also welcomes all pupils in the school. First Years have a Mass to welcome them to the school at the start of the year. There is a Graduation Mass for the Leaving Cert class and their parents in May. Other prayer services are held in class at various significant points in the year.
- c) The role of the whole staff is to facilitate and help at the various church services; to assist in Lenten fundraising where appropriate; and to generally help maintain the Christian ethos of the school.
- d) Our aim is eventually to provide Retreats (or similar experiences) to all year groups.
- e) Agreed response to sudden death of student or staff member:

In conjunction with the school's Critical Incident Policy, a number of actions may be taken:

1. Gather accurate information.
2. Contact appropriate agencies.
3. Convene a meeting of key staff – Critical Incident Management Team ( Dr Kevin Healy, Principal; Mr Denis O'Sullivan, Deputy Principal; Fr Anthony O'Mahony; Mary Keegan, Guidance Counsellor; Cait Fain, NEPS Psychologist)
4. Hold staff meeting – try to maintain normal routines
5. Inform parents/ inform students
6. Contact bereaved family.
7. Organise reunion of students with parents, if necessary
8. Important to maintain the normal school routine as much as possible.
9. Principal will liaise with the parents of the deceased regarding any arrangements.
10. There will be a unified approach to informing the pupils of the incident, if relevant.
11. A table set up with a candle and/ or photo of the deceased.
12. A book of condolences opened.
13. Pupil representatives may attend funeral.
14. Prayer service may be held.

## **Outreach Programmes**

Each year Students are encouraged to fundraise as part of the Trócaire Lenten Appeal. In addition, students are actively involved in a variety of fund-raising and charitable works throughout the school year.

## **Parental Involvement**

Parents are informed of the aims, objectives and content of the Religious Education Programmes by means of participation by Religious Education teachers at the parent/teacher meetings. In addition, the Board of Management takes an active interest in the RE curriculum.

## **Parish**

The school is fed from various Parishes in the Bantry area and pupils are actively encouraged to participate in any parish events. In addition, the school has close links with the Bantry parish, and Fr Anthony O'Mahony visits the school on a regular basis and either Fr O'Mahony or any other priest of the parish is available for various liturgies as required. The Church of Ireland Rector, Rev. Paul Willoughby also visits and attends liturgies. Mr David Ross, Pastor of the Christian Fellowship Evangelical Community may also attend liturgies.

## **Inclusion**

All pupils are encouraged to participate in classes and services.

Pupils who opt out of the RE programme will often participate in meditation activities or retreats.

The pupils of the special needs class in the school attend RE classes and actively participate in liturgies.

When appropriate, we have included prayers in Polish at whole school services to include the Polish nationals currently attending the school. Pupils are made aware of the Mass in Polish on the third Saturday of the month in St Finbarr's church. Advice offered to those Polish children seeking Confirmation.

### **Policy Monitoring and Timeframe**

Effective policy requires constant monitoring and evaluation to ensure successful implementation and to review what adjustments may be necessary from time to time.

At the end of each year, the RE department meet to evaluate the success of the policy implementation.

### **Timeframe**

Apart from the usual on-going informal monitoring that would occur with every area of policy, formal monitoring would be appropriate at least twice in the first year and at least once during each subsequent year.

This policy will come into effect on \_\_\_\_\_.

It will be reviewed after \_\_\_\_\_ year/s.