**LAUREL HILL SECONDARY SCHOOL FCJ**

**RELIGIOUS EDUCATION POLICY**

**Religious Education Policy/P.2**

**The Religious Education Policy of Laurel Hill Secondary School, which is under the Trusteeship of the Le Chéile School Trust.**

**Mission Statement :**

**Faithful Companions of Jesus Philosophy of Education**

Companionship is central to the FCJ Philosophy of Education. It is particularly expressed through faithfulness, gentleness and respect. In the spirit of the FCJ Foundress, Marie Madeleine d’Houet, the school seeks to create a caring atmosphere where all can find a place and feel valued. The uniqueness of each person is respected and all are invited to pursue their gifts for the service of others, for the transformation of society and the coming of the reign of God.

All education programmes and activities emphasise the formation of the whole person. The FCJ school community seeks to provide a stimulating and supportive environment, encouraging all to develop their full potential, with a special care for those deprived in any way.

Responsible citizenship, cultural identity, cares for the environment and peace that does justice are fundamental principles in FCJ educational philosophy. On-going reflection, evaluation and innovation ensure that the school is open to the signs of the times.

Each member of the school community is committed to work in the light of Gospel values and in response to Jesus cry “I thirst” as spoken in the world today. Mary, mother of God has a special place in FCJ tradition and in our school. Through “finding God in all things”, FCJ schools strive to be nurturers of life and joyful messengers of hope and love, inspired by the mission of Jesus: “I have come that they may have life and have it to the full” (John 10)

**As a Catholic school within the Faithful Companion of Jesus tradition, this R.E. Policy will impact positively on the whole school community and therefore have 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.**
* **Parents and guardians who support the ethos of the school and facilitate the faith formations of their children.**
* **The students who actively participate in the R.E. programme as a key element of their holistic education.**

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**A Rationale for the Policy :**

As a Catholic school, we are committed to the provision of a holistic education based on the unique dignity of every human being as a person made in the image and likeness of God. We recognise and proclaim that “transformative education is essentially a spiritual process”. Within this view of education, Religious Education plays a key role in helping students to become aware of their own infinite worth, the spiritual dimension of life, the importance of their contribution to the world in which they live, the value of critical thinking and the role of religion as a force for good in life and society. This policy will guide our work in delivering an excellent R.E. programme that will assist our students to become the best they can be on their journey through life.

**The Aims of R.E. in the School :**

To foster the growth of faith as 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.
* Other students may come to the school with limited ability to engage with the spiritual. The general programme of the school will be considered as a form of pre-evangelisation. This 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 of Catholic liturgy and rituals. In this situation, the school acts in an evangelisation role. It helps them develop that knowledge. They are helped 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)

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**Staffing and Development :**

Religious Education is an integral part of our school ethos and school community. Due consideration is given to, the appointment and selection of qualified teachers and the allocations of class periods. Upgrading and enhancing teaching skills and resources is vital to the role of the teacher of Religious Education. The management of this school supports teachers of Religious Education through encouraging and supporting attendance at in-service, allocation of sufficient funds for resources and also supporting Religious events both within and outside the school.

We currently have five trained Religious Educators and one of these co-ordinates the subject.

There is a full time Chaplain working here and between two other schools, our sister school Laurel Hill Coláiste and Scoil Carmel. The role of the Chaplain is to, celebrate school liturgies and class liturgies when necessary, support and develop the on-going faith formation of the students, to provide support and resources to the Religious Teachers, to provide pastoral care to the students when the need arises.

**Curriculum and Resources :**

First, second, third, fifth and sixth year students have Religious Education three times a week. Fourth years have it twice a week.

R.E. is not an examination subject in this school.

**Junior Cycle :**

The Junior Cycle programme is the State Examination Syllabus (with other materials and resources used to compliment this where appropriate). The sections covered are:

* Community (Communities) of Faith
* Christianity
* World Religions
* Development of Faith
* The World of Ritual
* The Moral Question

**Senior Cycle** :

The sections covered are :

* The Search for Meaning
* Christianity
* Morality
* Celebrating Faith and Life
* Communication with God
* A Living Faith – the work of Justice.
* Story

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**Resources :**

The R.E. Department decide on appropriate text books for the relevant year groups on an annual basis. Students are referred to relevant reference material to support understanding of the topic covered as necessary. The school provides interactive rooms, therefore, the internet and the use of data projectors aid and support the teaching of Religious Education.

**Books : Junior Cycle - Religion for Living, Connie Duffy**

 **The Good News Bible**

 **Senior Cycle** - **Inner Place, Tom Gunning**

 **The Challenge of God, Niall Boyle**

 **The Good News Bible**

**Liturgical Celebration :**

**Sept:** **Opening of Year Mass (entire school body in local Redemptorist Church)**

**Oct:** **Meditation/Lectio Divina (appropriate to each class group in Meditation Room**

**regularly throughout the academic year).**

**Nov:** **Remembrance of the Dead Prayer Service (class by class in R.E. room)**

**Dec:** **Mass to celebrate our Lady on Immaculate Conception Dec 8th with**

**1st yrs and 2nd yrs.**

**Advent**

**Christmas**

**Jan:** **New Year – Epiphany.**

**Feb:** **Catholic Education Week.**

**Ash Wednesday (when it occurs during the academic year).**

* **Prayer Service for 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 5th and 6th yrs.**
* **Mass for 4th years.**

**March**: **Lent – Prayer Service / Stations of the Cross (year group by year group in school chapel)**

**April: Easter**

**May:**  **Celebrate Our Lady.**

 **Graduation Mass (entire school body at St. Joseph’s Parish Church)**

Reconciliation takes place throughout the year so that all the students will have the opportunity to avail of the Sacrament with the local Redemptorist Community in their church.

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During the Liturgical Year the Religion Teachers engage the students with the various Saints, when their feast day is imminent – St. Francis, St. Clare, St. Bridget, St. Patrick and St. Valentine etc.

Very important to the school is the life of Marie Madeleine d’Houet, the students are taught her ethos and passion for life and invited to be empowered by it. Throughout the school, there are pictures of Madame d’Houet, along with Catholic religious symbols.

In this school we have a chapel and a meditation room.

**Children with Special Educational Needs :**

At any one time in the school body we have approximately sixty students with special needs. Every effort is made to ensure that every single student in this school participates fully in the R.E. programme.

**Child Protection Guidelines :**

Child Protection Guidelines are adhered to in all areas of the programme.

**Retreats :**

A long standing tradition in this school has been the importance of Retreats in the lives of the students during their time in Laurel Hill. For the last five years a Retreat Team called Myrrh Retreat Team from Mallow in Co. Cork, facilitates the retreats here in the school for the girls year by year. The retreats are evaluated by the experience of the students and their wish to have the team to come again.

**Outreach Programmes :**

There is a huge commitment to projects outside the school. A great deal of fundraising takes place either through the girls own initiatives, i.e. cake sales, raffles etc. for charities that are local, national and global. Trocaire staff visit the school each year, empowering the students to become more aware of the importance of involvement in peace, justice and developmental programmes taking place all around the world.

A group of students take part each year in a residential Leadership Training Programme called Anois, facilitated by the Diocese. This year, for the first time, students trained as Faith Friends to work long side confirmation students from the local primary schools.

We have guest speakers to come and talk with the girls, who come from various backgrounds but hold to the Catholic tradition, to give witness to the importance of Faith in their lives.

**Parental Involvement :**

Parents are informed of the aims, objectives and content of Religious Education programmes taking place in this school, through information evenings, our prospectus which outlines the mission and ethos of our school. Parents are invited to events like the Graduation Mass and Christmas Carols. The parents’ representatives on the school board are invited to the Opening School Mass. They are invited to participate in events, promoting the values of Madam d’Houet organised by the Community of the Faithful Companions of Jesus.

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**Inclusion of Students of Other Faiths :**

While we welcome students of other faith traditions to our school, we are not in a position to offer them liturgies specific to their faith tradition but they are always welcome to attend those that take place in the school. We are more than aware of the importance of having liturgies that everybody can participate in fully. During reconciliation, we invite students of other faith traditions to meet with the priest if they so wish, with the only agenda ever being for them, to feel welcome in our place of worship and for them to be recognised fully for the faith tradition they belong to. Having a number of Islamic students, we recognise their times of ritual such as Ramadan. The importance of recognising our differences also allows us to embrace what we have in common, therefore we can pray in Taize Style together, remembering our loved ones in November, we can pray with scripture together and when we empower our students in their faith journey with God, it is something beautiful we can do together.

**Conclusion :**

Here in Laurel Hill Secondary School, we believe that effective policy requires constant review and evaluation to ensure its successful implementation and where and if necessary, to make adjustments.

Therefore,

* The Religious Education Department will monitor policy implementation.
* The Religious Education Department will liaise with management regarding the R.E. Policy implementation.
* At the end of each year, the Religious Education Department meet to review and evaluate the implementation of this policy.

This policy will be reviewed periodically and as necessary.

**Signed : \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

 **Chairperson, Board of Management**

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