

Coláiste Éanna Policy on Religious Education

Preamble:

Human development is the development of the awareness of self as separate and unique, with the capacity for reflection, imagination and creativity; open to ideas of truth, goodness, and beauty. From earliest times, the experience of the spiritual and the human search for meaning have frequently found expression in a religious interpretation of life. The history of humanity has been indelibly marked by the contributions of religious traditions. In Ireland, Christianity is part of our rich cultural heritage and has played a significant role in shaping our vision of ourselves, our world, and our relationships with others. However, effective functioning in an increasingly complex culture demands that individuals have an understanding of a variety of religious traditions, and an appreciation of the richness of the major religious traditions encountered not just in Ireland, but in Europe and in the wider global context.

While the whole school curriculum, built around the principles of knowledge, understanding, skills and attitudes, is concerned with promoting personal growth and facilitating the spiritual development of students, religious education is well placed to provide students with opportunities for reflection on human experience, as well as for understanding and interpretation of that experience. Such opportunities encourage the students' participation in their own conscious and critical development.

Religious education should ensure that students are exposed to a broad range of religious traditions and also to the non-religious interpretation of life. It has a particular role to play in the curriculum in the promotion of tolerance and mutual understanding. It seeks to develop in students the skills needed to engage in meaningful dialogue with those of other or of no religious traditions.

Religious education, in offering opportunities to develop an informed and critical understanding of the Christian tradition in its historical origins and cultural and social expressions, should be part of a curriculum which seeks to promote the critical and cultural development of the individual in his or her social and personal contexts.

Religious education makes a significant contribution to a curriculum which seeks to provide for the moral development of students. It introduces a variety of ethical codes and norms for behaviour. Students are encouraged to engage critically with these moral systems in an effort to arrive at a thought-through moral stance, which will serve as a foundation for the decisions they will face as adults, and for the patterns of behaviour and commitment which will mark how they will relate to their local communities and to the world in general.

Section 1:

1.1 Religious Education holds a central place in the learning experience at Coláiste Éanna. As a Christian Brothers School we are deeply conscious of our responsibilities to preserve the flame of faith that has been handed down to us from Blessed Edmund Rice, our founder, and to ensure the future of our school as a Christian community, dedicated to learning and excellence. Whilst being a distinctively Catholic school, as reflected in our ethos and central in our Mission Statement, we aim to ensure that Coláiste Éanna is an inclusive school that welcomes boys of all faiths. This policy is not confined to the RE classroom but, rather, permeates the entire school community.

As teachers in an ERST School, the whole staff embraces and safeguards the ethos of the school and supports the frequently cross-curricular nature of Religious Education. The task of the RE department is to fully implement the aims and objectives of the RE policy and to review the policy on an ongoing basis so as to ensure a high standard and effective delivery of Religious Education in Coláiste Éanna. It is the role of the Class Teachers to facilitate the implementation of the RE policy in conjunction with the entire school community. Parents/Guardians can also support the RE programme in the school by facilitating the faith formation of their children. Students are expected to participate in the RE policy by being inclusive, tolerant and respectful of other faiths in addition to promoting a 'spirit of openness' in that the best learning encounter can arise from meeting students from other faith traditions. Students will also be given ample opportunity through Masses, Carol

Services etc. to discover the riches inherent in the Catholic faith from a religious education and faith formation perspective.

1.2 Mission Statement:

Mission Statement.

Colaiste Eanna is a Catholic School in the tradition of Blessed Edmund Rice.

As a community, we aim to nurture mutual respect among all members in a safe environment. The personal, social, spiritual and academic development of all is promoted.

The school is committed to providing an ordered learning environment, which encourages the school community to realize its full potential.

1.3 Rationale:

As an Edmund Rice School we are committed to the importance of formal religious and moral education. As outlined in our Admissions Policy, Religion is a core subject on the curriculum at Coláiste Éanna and integral to the ethos of the school. All students are expected to participate in the study of Religion.

This policy allows us an opportunity to reflect on, explore and articulate what it means to be an Edmund Rice School. We take inspiration from the motto adopted by Blessed Edmund, “The Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away” (Job 1:21) and we continue to follow in the footsteps of our founder by caring for the poor and under-privileged. It is our hope and privilege to harness the religious development of our students and to provide opportunities for them to encounter and come to know God. We strive to be faithful to the founding intention of Edmund Rice and the implications of what it means to be a Catholic School in this Edmund Rice tradition in third millennium Ireland.

1.4 The Vision of a Blessed Edmund Rice School:

Inspired by the vision of Blessed Edmund Rice, the school community of Coláiste Éanna:

- Seeks to live by the values of the Gospels of the New Testament.
- Recognises the dignity of each individual
- Has a special concern for the Poor and Underprivileged as evidenced in the school's involvement with the Concern Fast, the Umbrella Foundation, the Niall Mellon Trust, the India Immersion Programme, etc.
- Contributes to the building of the local community as evidenced through participation in the Faith Friends Programme.
- Works for Peace and Justice in Society.

1.5 Aims of Religious Education at Coláiste Éanna:

The general aim of the Religion Department is to provide students with ample opportunity to develop spiritually and personally and to be individuals who can think for themselves and apply Christian values to their own lives. To this end, we encourage students to participate in social justice activities such as the India Immersion Project, organized in conjunction with the Christian Brothers, support for `The Niall Mellon Trust` and `The Umbrella Foundation`, participation in the Concern Fast and in-school responses to crises such as the recent earthquake in Haiti.

Through the medium of religious education we aspire:

- To contribute to the Moral and Religious Development of our students
- To cultivate values such as:
 - Respect and Care for the Weak (Community Care Programme)
 - Co-operation between students (PACE, Student Council)
 - Justice and Fair Play for All
 - Respect for the Truth
 - Respect and Care for the Environment (Green Schools Programme)

- A Love for Learning
- Exploiting one's own God-given Potential to the Full
- To provide opportunities to experience and deepen sacramental awareness
- To encourage our students to ask and to seek answers to important questions
- To cultivate understanding, knowledge and tolerance of religions other than Christianity.
- To foster an 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 how they continue to have an impact on personal lifestyle, inter-personal 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.

Section 2:

2.1 Staffing and Scope of this Policy:

Currently, there are five RE teachers in Coláiste Éanna. They are: Ms. Denise Donlon, Ms. Caroline Egan, Ms. Julianne Scanlon, Mr. Patrick Carey and Mr. Kieran Durney.

The Board of Management approves the Coláiste Éanna Policy on Religious Education and is responsible for ensuring its effective implementation.

The Principal is fully supportive of the Coláiste Éanna Policy on Religious Education and ensures that the RE Department receives appropriate support in implementing the policy and is adequately resourced.

As teachers in a Christian Brothers School, the hope is that the entire staff at Coláiste Éanna embraces and safeguards the Catholic Ethos of the school.

Parents and Guardians are expected to respect the religious and educational philosophy of Coláiste Éanna, as outlined in the school's Mission Statement. This is a pre-condition of attendance at Coláiste Éanna. Parents and Guardians can also support the RE programme in the school by facilitating the faith formation of their children.

All students at Coláiste Éanna are expected to participate in Religious Education. Requests to be exempted from the study of Religion must be addressed by parents/guardians (by the student if he has reached the age of 18 years of age) to the Board of Management, which retains the exclusive right to adjudicate on such requests. In considering any such request, the Board may seek a meeting with parents/guardians in relation to the issue (with the student if he has reached the age of 18 years).

Students are asked to participate in a positive and co-operative manner and are expected to be inclusive, tolerant and respectful of other faiths in addition to promoting a 'spirit of openness' in that the best learning encounter can arise from meeting students from other faith traditions. Where the teacher of Religious Education chooses to begin RE class with a prayer, all students are expected to show courtesy and respect during this process.

Coláiste Éanna operates in close harmony with Ballyroan Parish and welcomes the opportunity to attend sacramental service at various stages throughout the year.

2.2 Structure and Resources:

Religious Education is formally timetabled for all junior and senior classes.

The Religious Education Programme for junior level, at Coláiste Éanna, broadly follows the syllabus prescribed by the Department of Education & Skills for Religious Education.

Currently, however, students are not required to sit the Junior Certificate Examination, as set by the Department, at the end of year three.

In Transition Year, in conjunction with the study of religion, there is a strong experiential focus. The aim is to challenge the student to consider his own personal response to God. The further aim is to consider how other cultures and traditions have responded to God.

At Senior Level, students at Coláiste Éanna follow a programme of Religious Education designed and agreed by all members of the Religious Education Department. The approach is modular, with each student being given an opportunity to reflect on different aspects of what it means to be a religious person in the modern world. The six modules are of equal duration and are completed over the two-year duration of the Senior Cycle Programme. The specific content of each module is outlined in the Coláiste Éanna School Plan and is frequently reviewed.

Where possible, students will be provided with an opportunity to attend a Retreat and/or a Programme of Reflection during each of the Junior Cycle, Transition Year and Senior Cycle Programmes

In May of each year, the Religious Education Department will meet to discuss the provision of Religious Education in Coláiste Éanna and to outline future plans

The following text books are currently in use:

Junior Cycle
`Religion For Living`
(Single Volume Edition)
by Connie Duffy

Senior Cycle
`Into The Deep`
by Tom Gunning

- **All students are expected to participate in the use of these texts in RE class.**

- **Students will have access to the `Good News` Bible and other reference material as their RE teachers determine.**

Further Resources available to the RE Department include:

- Access to The Prayer Room for guided meditation and prayer services. Students may also visit the Prayer Room at 8.30am and at morning break but they may not be late for class at these or other times as a result of such visits. The Prayer Room is not accessible to students during lunchtime unless by prior arrangement with the Principal and where appropriate arrangements have been put in place for the adequate supervision of students and for securing this section of the Main Building during and after such visits.
- Interactive Whiteboards
- Fully equipped IT Room with internet access
- DVD facilities and resources
- Membership of schoolethos.ie
- RE teachers are facilitated in attending in-service.

The Board of Management makes an annual budget available to the RE Department. Any application for additional resources receives appropriate consideration from the Principal and The Board of Management.

At Coláiste Éanna, teachers of Religious Education will be provided with every opportunity to attend In-Service Development Courses in Religious Education and will be provided with all appropriate supports to enable them to attend such courses.

Diocesan Advisors are, at all times, welcomed at Coláiste Éanna. Their advice and support has proved invaluable in the presentation of the religious Education Programme in the school.

2.3 The Liturgical Year at Coláiste Éanna:

It is the intention that the Liturgical Year in the school will be marked in the following manner:

- September – Mass to mark the beginning of the new School Year (Ballyroan Parish Church)
- November – Remembering Our Loved Ones (Bare Tree in New Building)
- December – Advent and Carol Service in Ballyroan Parish Church/Jesse Tree/Crib
- February – Catholic Schools Week/Ash Wednesday.
- March – Lent/ St. Patrick’s Day
- April – Easter
- May – Graduation Mass/ Edmund Rice Day (05 May)

Section 3:

3.1 Students of Other Faiths or Religious Denomination:

All students are expected to participate in Religious Education Class at Coláiste Éanna.

Requests for a student to be exempted from the study of Religion shall be addressed by parents/guardians (by the student if he has reached the age of 18 years of age) to the Board of Management, which retains the exclusive right to adjudicate on such requests. In considering any such request, the Board may seek a meeting with parents/guardians in relation to the issue (with the student if he has reached the age of 18 years).

Although Coláiste Éanna is a Catholic School, students belonging to other religions are welcomed into the school community on condition that they and their parents/guardians undertake to respect the religious and educational philosophy of the Christian Brothers as set out in the school’s Mission Statement and the ERST Charter.

It is important to note that religious education involves the study of religions other than Christianity and Coláiste Éanna is anxious that all of its students would be exposed to an understanding and appreciation of the richness associated with major world religions. Much of the focus in the Religious Education Programme at Coláiste Éanna relates to issues of Morality, Community, The Search for Meaning, Social Justice, Integrity, Value Systems and Human Rights.

Where class groups attend the Prayer Room with their RE teacher, students of religions other than Christianity are expected to attend. Where this involves periods of reflection and prayer, they are expected to respect the Christian Prayer Process and are encouraged to reflect and pray in accordance with their own religious beliefs. Students may also visit the Prayer Room at 8.30am and at morning break but they may not be late for class at these or other times as a result of such visits. The Prayer Room is not accessible to students during lunchtime unless by prior arrangement with the Principal and where appropriate arrangements have been put in place for the adequate supervision of students and for securing this section of the Main Building during and after such visits.

Where class groups attend Ballyroan Church or other churches for service, students of religions other than Christianity are invited to attend. They are encouraged to reflect and pray in accordance with their own religious beliefs.

If parents have serious reservations about their sons attending the Prayer Room or attending for church services, they may collect their sons from Coláiste Éanna and arrange for their safe supervision away from the school during the course of these visits, ensuring that they return to school for normal classes after services have ended. It is essential that parents, in these instances, inform the school in writing of these arrangements. Alternatively, parents may inform the school in writing of their consent for their sons to leave Coláiste Éanna while these visits take place. In addition, they will advise the school, in writing, that they accept full responsibility for the safety and welfare of their sons while away from the school and indemnify the Board of Management from responsibility during these periods of absence.

Parents will receive adequate notice of any such visits.

3.2 Students of no Affiliation to a Religion or Faith Community:

While a belief in God is beneficial in the study of Religion at Coláiste Éanna, it is not essential. A student does not need to believe in God in order to study Religion. Students will not, under any circumstances, be tested on their religious belief or lack of. More specifically, students are exposed to a knowledge, understanding and appreciation of the content of the Religious Education Programme at Coláiste Éanna. Each student will bring his own unique questions and contribution to the study of religious Education at the school.

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management at its meeting on 08 February, 2011.

Members present: Mr. P. Collings (Chairperson), Ms. M. Logue, Ms. Mary O’ Durcáin, Mr. P. Conway, Mr. P O’ Ceallaigh, Ms. H. McGrath, Mr. G. Flaherty.

Signed: Date:

Mr. P. Collings (Chairperson)

