

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION POLICY

1.0 INTRODUCTION

I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full. John 10:10

The mission of the Church has its origins in the person of Jesus. It is his mission that it is called to carry out in every age; it is his Good News that it offers. The Catholic school gives expression to this mission in its life and ministry, under the authority and leadership of the local Bishop, and with the guidance and support of the parish priest.

The Bishop is the chief teacher of the Diocese and is responsible for the integrity of teaching in the areas of faith and morals in his Diocese. He therefore has the authority and the duty to oversee the Religious Education program in schools and those appointed to teach it (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1994, paras. 888-890). It is the expectation of the Bishop that To Live in Christ Jesus, the Diocesan Religious Education Curriculum be taught in each Catholic school in the Diocese of Sale.

In ratifying the appointment of a principal to a Catholic school in the Diocese, the Bishop authorises the principal to undertake the religious leadership of the school, working closely with the parish priest to bring to life in the Catholic school the particular charism of the parish. The principal, in turn, appoints religious education leaders and teachers who are entrusted with educating students in accordance with the Religious Education Policy of the Diocese. The Principal also ensures that each staff member understands the role and responsibility that each has in the religious education of the school community.

Catholic schooling, in all its dimensions, is an explicitly religious educational undertaking. Fundamental to the religious dimension of Catholic schooling are the partnerships between parents/caregivers, parish priest, the school and local faith community with each having its own distinct contribution to make.

The Catholic school, through its defining culture, charism, heritage, curriculum and classroom-based Religious Education program, plays an important formative role in the support of families in the religious education of those to whom it ministers. The school, as the educative mission of the local parish under the guidance of the parish priest is a place of testimony and acceptance, where invitations to nurture faith and spirituality are provided to young people by school staff and parish priests, making possible the development of Post Critical Belief. It is also a place where the sacramental and dialogical approach to the teaching of Religious Education promotes a recontextualising school environment. This environment aims to both challenge and affirm people, giving shape to their personal identity in conversation with and in the service of others, against the background of the Catholic Tradition.

An evangelising community gets involved by word and deed in people's daily lives; it bridges distances, it is willing to abase itself if necessary, and it embraces human life... it is also supportive, standing by people at every step of the way, no matter how difficult... (Francis, 2013, para. 24)

2.0 PURPOSE

This policy will provide Catholic schools in the Diocese of Sale with clarity, structure and direction in:

- the role of the school in the Mission of the Church and the work of the parish
- enhancing Catholic school Identity
- faith development and spirituality
- professional development of staff
- curriculum delivery
- prayer and liturgy
- Catholic social teaching
- time allocation.

3.0 PRINCIPLES

The Religious Education program to be taught in Catholic schools in the Diocese of Sale is that promulgated by the Bishop of Sale. Religious Education leadership is crucial in animating the Catholic identity of the school and the principal has the responsibility for religious leadership of the school.

Religious Education in the Diocese of Sale is based on the following principles:

Religious Education as the lived experience of the school community in support of the Mission of the church and the work of the parish:

- develops an awareness of God, self, others and the world through an intellectual and spiritual journey in the context of the Catholic Tradition
- opens possibilities of personal meaning-making
- invites a relationship with the Risen Lord in the context of community
- is attentive to the interior, spiritual, reflective capacities and dimensions of students and staff
- offers reflective learning opportunities within and beyond the classroom: a sequential P-12 course of study
- promotes Post Critical Belief through a recontextualisation of the Catholic Tradition in dialogue with other faith traditions and life philosophies
- offers a systematic, holistic and comprehensive religious education environment which includes the prayer, liturgical and sacramental life of the school, opportunities for retreats and reflection experiences, community outreach, social action and justice programs and the embedding of a Catholic perspective or Catholic world view across the whole school curriculum.

Religious Education as a discrete curriculum area:

- *is derived from expressions of God's revelation in Scripture, Tradition, liturgy and life*
- *has its own intellectual rigour which seeks to develop the knowledge, skills and behaviours which flow from the Catholic Tradition*
- *encompasses faith and ethical dimensions*
- *requires a pedagogy through which teachers can be seen as witnesses, specialists and moderators*
- *requires a dialogical and recontextualising approach*
- *has an explicit progression of learning F – 12*
- *is taught developed and resourced with the same commitment as all other learning areas*
- *involves the expectation that teachers of Religious Education have the required qualification Accreditation to Teach Religious Education or Lead in a Catholic School.*

4.0 DEFINITIONS

- 4.1 **Catholic Identity:** The manner in which a school manifests its Catholic nature and serves to inform a school's vision, policies, priorities and practices.
- 4.2 **Mission:** The mission of the Catholic School is the integration of faith and life inspired by the life of Jesus Christ and the teachings of the Church. It is expressed and grounded in the search for meaning, and through an authentic sense of welcome, community and outreach. This saving mission of the Church is founded in a relationship with Jesus.
- 4.3 **Religious Education Curriculum:** The curriculum for Religious Education promulgated for use in the Diocese of Sale, *To Live in Christ Jesus*.
- 4.4 **Appropriate Religious Education Pedagogy:** A pedagogy that serves the mission of the Catholic school and is animated by Catholic understandings of culture, the human person and creation. It is also reflective of contemporary approaches to learning that recognise the need to know each learner and develop approaches that meet their needs, utilising a variety of strategies that will engage, challenge and promote encounters with the transcendent.
- 4.5 **Recontextualisation:** The process of making necessary adjustments to understanding as a result of changes in context. It is how our understanding of God, Church, Scripture and all that takes place in a Catholic school is constantly considered, or reconsidered. It is a constant exercise that retells the Christian story in a contemporary way.
- 4.6 **Post Critical Belief:** A mature faith stance reached after considerable reflection and delving into the mystery of God and a person's relationship with the transcendent. A person's relationship with God is mediated through the signs and symbols experienced in a faith community. Only through symbolic mediation (via stories,

rituals, prayer, traditions, etc) and on-going interpretation can people enter into a relationship with God.

- 4.7 **Dialogue:** A school deliberately placing emphasis on its Catholic inspiration, while simultaneously taking seriously the multicultural world it belongs to. A multiplicity of voices, views and perspectives are recognised and engaged with as contributions to this dialogue. In the midst of plurality, a school searches for what it means to be Christian today.
- 4.8 **Witness:** Teachers who embody an intentional Christian life. In doing this they share insights and experiences that are appropriate for the learning process and the level of readiness of students. To do this effectively, teachers must have reflected on their personal experience of faith, and formed a positive appropriation of Christian faith in their personal life journey.
- 4.9 **Specialist:** Teachers who have a deep understanding of Catholic beliefs and understandings and are suitably immersed within them. They should have a deep knowledge of the content of the Religious Education curriculum in order to offer and facilitate student learning opportunities and ensure a progression of learning for all students. Competent knowledge in the fields of theology and Scripture will help teachers in their role as specialists, as will an ongoing process of professional learning in Religious Education, Theology and Scripture.
- 4.10 **Moderator:** Teachers who serve as guides and mentors, challenging and enabling students to freely articulate their own intellectual, moral and religious positions. As moderators, teachers will work to create learning environments that allow deep, dialogical encounters with faith traditions, cultural contexts and different life philosophies. They will enable students to explore their own presumptions, views and commitments in their search for meaning. Teachers as moderators will know how to engage students with Catholic beliefs and values without imposing these beliefs and values on them. They will also know how to create teaching and learning opportunities where students feel free to share their own understanding and viewpoints as they engage with the Catholic story.

5.0 EXPECTED OUTCOMES

All Catholic schools in the Diocese of Sale will:

- Have a deepened understanding of and give greater expression to Catholic identity within their communities.
- Implement the Diocesan Religious Education Policy.
- Implement the Diocesan Religious Education Curriculum.
- Employ committed and qualified Religious Education Leaders.
- Have accredited and committed teachers in Religious Education.
- Ensure that the Religious Education Curriculum is taught and resourced with the same commitment as other learning areas.
- Adhere to the time allocation for Religious Education as stated in the Procedures document accompanying this policy.
- Have greater clarity in relation to the Religious Education expectations in the Diocese of Sale.

- Work to ensure students are active participants in Religious Education and are encouraged to move towards Post Critical Belief.
- Have strengthened partnerships with parents/caregivers, parish and the broader community.

6.0 REFERENCES

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REVIEW

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