

**Le Chéile Schools Trust**

**Template for a Religious Education Policy**

All the policies of a school in the Le Chéile Trust should reflect the desire to be true to both the founding intention of the school and the spirit of the le Cheile Charter which outlines the mission of the Trust and its vision of education. “The main focus of the Le Cheile Vision statement is on the spiritual and faith formation hopes of the Religious Congregations which build on the excellence of a general education.” (Le Chéile Charter p.1)

 This template does not attempt to write the policy but suggests a framework for the writing of the policy and indicates what specific content should be included. The process of reflection, discussion and debate that accompanies the writing of the document is as important as the finished product because it encourages the key players to take ownership of and to plan for the teaching of RE as an integral part of the educational vision of the school.

**Format of a Religious Education Policy**

The Religious Education Policy of .....(name of school)... which is under the Trusteeship of the Le Chéile Schools Trust.

Insert School Mission Statement here:

As a Catholic school within the ..... (name of founding congregation) tradition this RE policy will impact positively on the whole school community having 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
•Pastoral care personnel who provide support and guidance for the students
•Parents and guardians who support the ethos of the school and facilitate the faith formation of their children
•The students who actively participate in the RE programme as a key element of their holistic education

**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 RE programme that will assist our students to become the best they can be on their journey through life.

**The Aims of RE in the School**

To foster the growth of faith at 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.

• Others 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)

**Specify the content of the policy under the following headings**:

**Staffing**: number of qualified teachers, role of coordinator, frequency and purpose of department meetings. List support offered through CPD or assistance of DAs, school chaplain or the Trustees.

**Curriculum**: Periods of RE per week (two hours minimum); outline of programmes at Junior cycle, TY and Senior cycle. What teaching methodologies and methods of assessment including homework and examinations are employed?

**Children with special educational needs**: Ensuring that students with special needs can participate fully in the RE programme

**Child protection guidelines**: Ensuring that the guidelines are adhered to in all areas of the programme

**Resources**: Texts books, use of ICT and online materials, meditation room or sacred space. Is there a budget?

**Liturgical Celebrations**: When, where, whole school, class or year groups? What is role of whole school staff?

**Retreats**: is there provision/ in what years and provided by whom. Are they evaluated and on what basis?

**Outreach Programmes**: Commitment to projects outside school through justice and peace programmes or development programmes in the parish, working with other schools or agencies at home or abroad.

**Parental involvement:** Opportunities through participation in liturgies, outreach programmes, guest speakers

**Inclusion of students of other faiths:** see JMB guidelines on Inclusion of Students of other Faiths in Catholic Secondary Schools, 2010.

**Conclusion**

Outline specific methods and timeframe for monitoring and evaluating the policy including the writing of a short report for the Board of Management and staff on the implementation of the policy.