



Working towards

A

Faith Development Policy

“Faith is not simply the subject matter of particular lessons but forms the foundation of all that we do and the horizon of all that takes place in the school.”

(Vision '08)



Why should CEIST Schools formulate a Faith Development Policy?

Department of Education Guidelines state that:

“A policy statement is a resource and a support for schools in dealing with difficult situations” and that “written policy serves as a reference point for pupils, parents and teachers. It promotes harmony by clarifying procedures, expectations and roles”.

www.sdpi.ie/guidelines/Unit0403.html

In the current climate Catholic schools are facing unprecedented opposition with calls from some quarters for the current system of education to be replaced by a totally state run system. However, it is the case that, as the prime educators of their children, parents must be afforded the fundamental right to send their children to denominational schools. Furthermore, research has shown that in spite of serious changes in society’s attitudes towards religious practice, the vast majority of parents in Ireland wish to have the choice of sending their children to Catholic schools. CEIST school communities, therefore, must be very clear with regard to their Catholic Ethos; to the purpose of their existence; and to their commitment to continuing Catholic Education in each of the congregational traditions into the future.

Parents have the primary responsibility for nurturing faith in their children and the school supports parents in this by providing not only an excellent academic education but also a high quality Religious Education programme for its students. However, while an R.E. policy gives consistency and continuity to the Religious Education programme in a school, in order to put the identity and ethos of the school into practice it is also necessary to acknowledge that Faith Development involves more than the R. E. programme for students. Faith Development is a process through which a faith community deepens its Christian life; it involves information, formation and leads to fundamental transformation.

The CEIST Charter, which is rooted in the rich tradition of the founding congregations, underpins all that happens in each of our schools. Gospel values permeate the life of the school, and the whole school community witnesses to a living faith based on a firm relationship with Jesus Christ. The Catholic ethos of the school and the characteristic spirit of the congregation which established it are enshrined in the Mission Statement.

In order to ensure clarity of thinking, and a deep understanding of the faith dimension of the school’s purpose, it is hoped that the attached guidelines will help each CEIST school community to draw up and implement its own Faith Development Policy. Many schools will wish to develop their Religious Education Policy as part of their Faith Development Policy. Others may wish to produce two separate documents – one concerned solely with R. E. and the other a separate statement of the school’s ethos and practice.

It is up to each school to adopt the option most suitable to their own situation. We would also suggest that those schools which have already drawn up their R.E./Faith

Development Policies would take this opportunity to review them in the light of these guidelines.

The following is a framework for drafting a school's Faith Development Policy. The wording given is formulated as an example of how a Faith Development Policy might be approached. Each school will have its own points to include and develop, particularly in the "Contents" section.

With regard to drawing up a Faith Development Policy it is vital to remember that while the Religion Team will be central to the formulation of the section on Religious Education, and key in the overall preparation of the document; this policy requires the involvement of the whole school community. It is therefore essential that the group entrusted with the task of bringing this policy forward comprises membership from various departments within the school.

An outline for the time-frame which will facilitate planning can be found on p.10.

What is Catholic Education?

Catholic Education is a lifelong process of human growth and development. It is more than schooling. It begins in the home, continues in the school and matures through involvement with the Christian community in the parish. These three dimensions of home, school and parish must work together if Catholic education is to truly attain its goal of forming mature human persons in the image and likeness of Christ.

CEIST Charter p.6.

Catholic education promotes the development of the whole person based on the belief that the human and the divine are inseparable. It promotes an explicit system of values based on the Gospels. The goal of Catholic education is the formation of the student. Catholic education prepares people not merely for the world of work but for the challenges of life. It provides learning experiences for students and teachers that will develop their capacity to think critically. It helps them to be fully human and fully alive. Catholic schools are open and welcoming to all cultures and traditions and care especially for the poor and those who are disadvantaged.

CEIST Website.

Catholic Education aims to help each student to develop his or her full potential as a human being. It will do so by preparing and disposing our pupils for this fullness of life, by enabling them to be people who are fully alive. Education means the development of the whole person. An education which makes no room to address the fundamental questions about the meaning of life could not be described as seeking such holistic development. By educating students in their every dimension according to the Gospel, Catholic schools seek to transform not only the individual human lives of our pupils, but also, through them, the society which they will help to build.

Vision '08

The Catholic School pursues cultural goals and the natural development of youth to the same degree as any other school but what makes the Catholic School distinctive in its efforts to do this is the specifically religious dimension which is revealed in 1) the climate of the school community, 2) its specifically Christian vision of personality development, 3) the relationship fostered between Gospel and culture and 4) the extent to which a faith perspective is integrated with all knowledge, as the school community undertakes its task.

Gravissimum Educationis (para. 8)

Faith development is central to Catholic education.

NAME OF SCHOOL

FAITH DEVELOPMENT POLICY

Mission Statement

_____ is a Catholic school (in the _____ tradition) *or* (founded by the sisters of _____) under the trusteeship of CEIST.....

(informed by the :

CEIST Charter;

- Mission: To provide a holistic education in the Catholic tradition.
- Vision: A compassionate and just society inspired by the life and teachings of Jesus Christ.)

And the Congregational Philosophy of Education.)

Introduction

A Catholic school, of its very nature, exists as a faith community and faith development is a process through which this community deepens its Christian life. Spiritual and moral development cannot be relegated to the realm of Religious Education only but are nurtured by the whole curriculum. Each member of the school community has a responsibility to live in a way that witnesses to the Gospel so that faith permeates all aspects of our school life.

“Faith is not simply the subject matter of particular lessons but forms the foundation of all that we do and the horizon of all that takes place in the school”.

Vision '08

Scope of the Policy:

This policy will impact on students, staff, parents and the local parish, as we strive to create a faith community in which Gospel values ensure a culture of good relationships, sensitive to the needs of each person and to the common good. Faith formation is the responsibility of the whole school community

Aims:

- To contribute to the religious formation and faith development of our students and to their spiritual and moral development.
- To encourage all members of the school community in their search for truth and in seeking answers to the fundamental questions about the meaning of life.
(Ref: *Vision '08 p.2*)
- To nourish the life of students, staff and parents as they work together for the common good, respecting each other's rights and the carrying out responsibilities in a manner which promotes the spiritual development of each person, achieves quality in teaching and learning, creates a sense of community and is founded on compassion and justice.
(Ref: *CEIST Charter p.12*)
- To allow each member of the school community to develop a personal relationship with Jesus Christ which will give meaning and purpose to their lives.
(Ref: *CEIST Charter p.12*)

Rationale

The rationale of the Faith Formation Policy /Religious Education Policy of *(Name the school)* is based on the **CEIST** Charter and on the characteristic spirit of *(Name the founder)* and the educational philosophy of *(Name the religious congregation)*

This policy will articulate this school's commitment to its Catholic ethos and to the religious and moral development of our students. It will ensure that in striving to achieve academic excellence, this school will also provide holistic education and spiritual formation that each student may learn to live in solidarity with other persons in search of the common good.

Goals:

- To promote awareness of the reality that faith formation belongs to the whole school community.
- To support and encourage parents in exercising their responsibility for their child's spiritual growth and faith formation in partnership with the school and their parish communities.
- To develop a sense of the presence of God in the lives of our students.
- To provide the framework for a school faith community which will enable its students to become catalysts for social transformation.

Relationship to Admissions Policy

In line with its admission policy and the Catholic ethos of the school, this school is open and accessible to all without discrimination.

Children of all faiths (or of no faith) are welcome to this school.

Each child is welcome to attend and benefit from the religious education programme of the school.

Relationship to other policies

All policies are informed by the school's Catholic / CEIST values. However, other policies which particularly reflect the school's Catholic ethos and its faith in action will include the school's Code of Behaviour, Anti-Bullying Policy, Child Protection Policy, S.P.H.E. Policy, R.S.E. Policy etc.

Roles and responsibilities

It is essential that all members of the school community commit to the implementation and practice of the Faith Development Policy:

*(In each of the following it is recommended that two suggestions be included as to **how** the responsibilities will be fulfilled)*

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| Board of Management | <ul style="list-style-type: none">- To commit to, to promote and to support the Catholic ethos of the school- To proactively initiate the drafting of a Faith Development Policy and to encourage its progress- To approve the policy and ensure its implementation |
| Principal and Deputy Principal | <ul style="list-style-type: none">- To ensure the procedures of the policy and work, towards its effective implementation. |
| All School Staff | <ul style="list-style-type: none">- It is vital that all staff members understand the values underpinning Catholic education and that they subscribe to engaging in the implementation and cultivation of a culture of faith in the life of the school. |
| Teachers of Religious Education & Chaplain | <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Formation will happen through formal programmes – but a Faith Development policy will ensure whole school support for the R.E. team in promoting the liturgical and sacramental life of the school. |

- Pastoral Care Team - Pastoral Care is at the heart of the Catholic school. The support and guidance given to students by the pastoral care team will be informed by the culture of faith which permeates the school.
- Parents and Guardians - To accept responsibility as the primary religious educators of their children.
- While understanding that the Catholic ethos of the school is respectful of, and open to, students of all faith traditions and none, parents must be prepared to acknowledge and support the Catholic ethos of the school.
- Students - will participate in the R.E. programme, undertake to live the values of the CEIST Charter to the best of their ability and endeavour to become involved in the liturgical celebrations and various social justice programmes undertaken by the school.

N.B.

Catholic schools have an obligation to provide Catholic students with an education and formation in the Catholic faith. There is also a long tradition of welcoming students of other faiths and facilitating, where possible, their spiritual and moral growth. However there is no obligation to provide students from other faith traditions with formation in their own faith.

The inspectorate is particularly interested in the ways in which Catholic schools are developing strategies for inclusion, therefore it is vitally important that the manner in which the school extends its welcome is clearly stated in this policy,

Policy Document

Content: A Faith Development Policy should include the following:

- Visibly Catholic – What tells visitors that our school is Catholic?
- Welcoming, inclusive community – Who welcomes? How are we inclusive?
In what ways do we actively support students who are educationally disadvantaged or who have special needs? How do we celebrate people of other faith traditions and none?
- Communication with parents / guardians – how is question of ethos communicated?
- Staff – commitment to supporting ethos / induction of new staff
- In-service – spiritual renewal for all staff

- Students - experience of faith community
- Facilities - prayer room / sacred space
- The Liturgical Year / Calendar
- Liturgies - whole school participation;
 - use of appropriate readings, music, symbols, artwork.
- Retreats - support from whole staff for student retreats
 - provision of retreats for staff
- Prayer – culture of prayer
- Cross-curricular links
- Ethos Team

Central to our Faith Development Policy is:

➤ **Religious Education.**

“Catholic schools commit resources and time to Religious Education as a priority”
(Vision '08)

- The Specific aims of Religious Education
- The R.E. Programme for each year group
- Number of class periods allocated
- Assessment techniques
- Planning for R.E.
- Catechists & Chaplain
- Facilities and resources
- Retreats
- In-service
- Prayer
- Liturgy
- Social awareness and justice projects
- Links with Parish
- Cultural diversity – Students of other faiths and none are welcome to attend R.E. classes. In a case where parents of a student from a non-Christian tradition wish them to be exempt from such attendance alternative arrangements must be made in agreement with school management.

Success Criteria

- How is the Liturgical Year celebrated / highlighted?
- Is the school visually Catholic? What are the first impressions given to visitors?
- How is a culture of prayer encouraged in the school? In what ways is it evident?

- What opportunities for spiritual renewal are provided for students? For staff?
- Is the school Prayer Room open and accessible to students/staff and is it well used?
- Can students articulate a sense of the presence of God in their lives?
- What Faith in Action projects are undertaken by the school? Are students/staff/parents/parish community aware of these justice projects and how are they highlighted?

Monitoring Evaluation and Review

The Faith Development Policy underpins the *raison d’etre* of this school, and therefore its implementation and ongoing effectiveness will require constant monitoring. Thus a scheme of regular evaluation and review must be adhered to.

- At the end of each year the R.E. Department to evaluate the policy from their perspective as a team.
- Every third year a whole staff review of the policy to ensure that the ethos is indeed being effectively carried into the future by the whole school community.
- Every fifth year a whole school review to take place with the inclusion of all the partners – Management, Staff, Students, Parents and, where possible, Parish representatives..

Time frame

1) Initial review by staff

Specify Faith Development Policy.

Decide if it is to include R.E.

Establish structure to advance process of policy formation:

Task Group (Ethos Team) to be established and

Policy Co-ordinator decided. Date _____

2) Development by Task Group

Establish Rationale

Research /consultation with all partners – Staff,
 Students (SRC)
 Parents (Parents’ Council)

Provisions of policy

Preparation of Draft Policy

Bring to Staff Date _____

Review by Board of Management Date _____

3) Evaluate and revise Draft
Present revised Draft to Staff Date _____

4) Amend if necessary
Communicate Draft policy to Board of Management, pupils (SRC) and parents (Parents Council) for review.

Date _____

Present to Board of Management for ratification. Date _____

After ratification

- **Communicate the agreed policy to all interested parties.**
- **Ongoing review as per policy.**

The R.E. Policy may be developed as a separate Policy – in which case its framework must also include:

- Name of the Policy
- Mission statement
- Scope of the Policy
- Rationale for the Policy (Which will include its relationship to the Faith Development Policy)
- Goals/objectives of the Policy
- The Roles and Responsibilities of all who are involved in developing, implementing, monitoring and reviewing the Policy
- Policy Content (as outlined above)
- Specification of success criteria
- How it is to be monitored and reviewed
- Time frame for review to be specified

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Note:

Equality proofing

The Education Act 1998 requires that the school address issues of equality of access and participation, Concern for equality is fundamental to the basic philosophy of all CEIST schools and permeates all aspects of school policy and planning. While this entails adopting forms of consultation that encourage and support participation by minority groups, it must also be remembered that fair application of all policies requires accommodation of students of other denominations and faiths only in so far as their needs do not impinge on the ethos of the school.

Policy Guideline Documents for Reference

CEIST Charter

Vision '08 – A Vision for Catholic Education in Ireland, Irish Catholic Bishop's Conference 2008

SDPI guidelines - www.sdpi.ie/guidelines/Unit0840.html
- www.sdpi.ie/guidelines/Unit0601.html
- www.sdpi.ie/guidelines/Unit0403.html

Noel Keating - Sample Faith Development Policy 2006

Guidelines from Mercy Trustees in Respect of Policy on Religious Education and Faith Formation - January 2001

Faith Development in Catholic Schools – “Be Good News”: Draft National Directory for Catechesis: Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference

Towards a Policy on R.E. – The Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference

An Tobar – Towards a Policy on RE in Post-Primary schools / Guidelines towards a policy for the inclusion of students of different faiths 2006

The Induction Process in the Catholic School CEC (The Education Agency of the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales) 1999