

Junior Cycle Religious Education and CEIST

Introduction

Religious Education is an integral part of the curriculum in every CEIST school. CEIST along with Boards of Management and Senior Leadership and Management Teams are charged with the responsibility of ensuring that every student receives a full, informative, uplifting, and real experience of Religious Education. The CEIST Charter reminds us that, “The full scope of religious education in our schools is to inform, form and transform people in the Catholic faith”. The spiritual wellbeing and faith development of all our students is therefore paramount and must always be a curricular priority.

Religious Education is a vital expression, one among many others, of the ethos of a CEIST school. It provides an invaluable space for students to explore together their questions about themselves, others, and our world. It also provides space to encounter truth and engage with questions around God and faith. Ultimately, at the heart of RE in a Catholic school is the CEIST vision that seeks the creation of a compassionate and just society inspired by the life and teachings of Jesus Christ. To reach that vision, students are encouraged to know Jesus and to come into a relationship with him; a relationship that can, through the Holy Spirit at work in their lives, transform not only their own lives but the lives of those around them and indeed their wider communities.

Guidance issued annually to schools on the Junior Cycle by the Department of Education and Skills makes clear that “When planning its Junior Cycle Programme, each school is required to take account of the school’s local context and the backgrounds, interests, and abilities of its students and reflect the characteristic spirit of the school” (*e.g. Circular Number: 0059/2021*). For CEIST schools, this means attending not only to students’ academic, social, emotional and physical wellbeing but also, in a very explicit and deliberate way, to students’ spiritual lives.

The Irish Episcopal Council direct that all Catholic schools provide two hours timetabled Religious Education for all students each week, but the content is, to a large extent, at the discretion of individual schools\teachers.

In Catholic schools in Ireland, RE is informed by *Share the Good News, the National Directory for Catechesis in Ireland (2011)* and other important documents from School Trusts, the Association of Patrons and Trustees of Catholic Schools (APTCS), the Catholic Education Partnership (CEP) and the Irish Bishops' Conference.

RE is also informed by the Religious Education Junior Cycle Specification and the Junior Cycle Framework at Junior Cycle and the Leaving Certification Religious Education Syllabus along with the Leaving Certificate non-Examination Framework for senior cycle.

At the heart of the Junior Cycle lies the need to provide students with quality learning opportunities that strike a balance between gaining knowledge and developing a wide range of skills, attitudes and thinking abilities. (*Framework for Junior Cycle (2015)*). In Catholic schools, equally essential are opportunities for personal reflection that allow for the deepening of faith and opportunities for the expression of that faith through prayer, service and liturgy.

Considering the importance of Religious Education in the life of our schools, CEIST is concerned that students who do not take Religious Education as a Junior or Leaving Certificate examination subject receive no recognition for the many hours of learning, reflection, participation and activity they have devoted to Religious Education. Our dedicated RE Teachers, who continuously do incredible work in innovative and imaginative ways, have no recourse to external acknowledgement, appreciation, or affirmation for their students. For these reasons we are introducing CEIST Certification for Junior Cycle Religious Education for any CEIST school that wishes to become involved. By so doing, learning in RE will be certified, by the Patron, as part of each student's Junior Cycle Profile of Achievement (JCPA) under 'Other Areas of Learning'.

This initiative seeks to support CEIST schools in their work of drawing from the rich history and tradition of our schools and also in their work of demonstrating to students and the wider community in which our schools exist the myriad ways in which that history and tradition continue to bear rich fruit today in the lives of our school students, their families, the school community and the wider community.

RE teachers are best placed to lead in terms of the implementation of this initiative. In turn, the school Principal, as the school's Faith Leader will take a direct interest in the work produced, actively encourage it and ultimately sign off on it. Following sign off, participating students will receive a certificate from CEIST. This certification can form part of the students Junior Cycle Profile of Achievement (JCPA) under Other Areas of Learning (OLA).

The way in which this certification initiative is connected to the *Framework for Junior Cycle*, and the *Junior Cycle Religious Education Specification* are outlined in greater detail in Appendix A. Each of the project titles, outlined below that form the basis of the initiative shows some of the ways in which the project is linked to the Specification and to the Framework.

We are committed to ensuring that any certification undertaken by CEIST is meaningful and carries weight. Therefore, there are a number of criteria which must be met by those seeking certification. We will be asking RE teachers to authenticate that these criteria have been met and the Principal to sign off on this. Appendix B provides teachers with a template to allow for this sign off and authentication.

Certification and CEIST values

This initiative is also obviously connected to the CEIST Charter. In particular, it seeks to make clear and important connections to our CEIST values:

1. *Promoting Spiritual and Human Development:* We believe a knowledge of and a personal relationship with Jesus Christ give meaning and purpose to our lives.
2. *Achieving Quality in Teaching and Learning:* We are committed to excellence and to continually improving the quality of teaching and learning.
3. *Showing Respect for Every Person:* We respect the unique and intrinsic value of every person.
4. *Creating Community:* Our schools are faith communities of welcome and hospitality where Gospel values are lived and where there is special care for those most in need.
5. *Being Just and Responsible:* We seek to act justly and responsibly in all our relationships.

Specifically in terms of the first value, the following might be noted:

- The central importance of engaging with Gospel values; as something that inspired the founding of schools but also as something alive in and through the current school's community's way of being together as a community of faith
- The ways in which the school nurtures in its students a sense of their cultural identity, an appreciation of the diversity of cultures and a respect for people of other races and religious traditions.

Requirements for Certification

Students in CEIST schools wishing to receive CEIST certification for their work in RE should complete **at least 4** of the projects listed below over the course of the 3-year RE programme. They should complete Project Title 1 **or** Title 2 and any 3 other Project Titles (Titles 3 to 8). (One of the options – Project Title 8 - is that the RE teacher organises for a pilgrimage in the local area or that the students participate in a school retreat. In many schools, this happens already so it is just a matter of connecting this activity to the certification as outlined in Title 8 below)

Project work can be completed in pairs or small groups to encourage the development of the key skill of cooperation. Each project has a synthesis piece entitled 'Work to bring it all together'. This is a vital part of the project as it challenges students to demonstrate the ways in which their learning has developed, and their thinking matured. On completion of at least one of their four projects, students should present their work to their classmates. Again, teachers are best placed to decide how such presentations can be managed in the context of their own students' needs and abilities, and in the wider context of the busyness of school life.

Some of these projects will be more challenging than others; it is good to provide challenges for which students have to work hard but RE teachers will be best placed to decide which projects best suit their own students' stage of learning. Students with additional learning needs will, of course, be guided by their teachers to engage with the project titles in a way that attends to these needs.

In keeping with the value of inclusion at the heart of all of our CEIST schools, RE teachers can explore ways in which the titles proposed below can speak to people of all faiths and no religious faiths, while also highlighting the Gospel values that are at the heart of CEIST schools.

Finally, it is hoped that schools will have an opportunity to showcase their students' work at a number of different annual events within their own school and also within the wider CEIST community of schools during the CEIST Calendar including for example, our annual Ceiliuradh, our annual meetings of Principals and Deputy Principals, meetings of the Board and of the members of CEIST.

It is also hoped to award an annual prize to one student/pair of students/group of students from one school for their work. Further information to follow on this.

(Note: for students completing their Junior Cycle in 2023, CEIST certification will be granted on completion of Title 1 or Title 2 and any ONE other project Title)

Project Titles

Complete Title 1 OR Title 2

	Project	Learning outcomes (JC Specification)	Key skills (KS), Principles (P), statements of learning (SOLs) (Framework for Junior Cycle)
1	<p>Our school's heartbeat – learning about who we are and what's important to us</p> <p>Each CEIST school in our network of schools is associated with at least ONE religious congregation. Research the work of the religious congregation with which your school is most closely associated under the following headings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Foundress/founder - Early History of Congregation. - History of your school - Values of the founder - Scripture passages that inspired the founder and informed his/her work - Current work being done by the congregation in Ireland and/or overseas and connection to founder's original vision - Current prayer life of religious sisters/priests/brothers; types of prayer, role of community-based prayer, retreats etc. - Being followers of Christ; what that meant and continues to mean for the religious congregation associated with your school 	1.2 1.3 1.8 1.11 2.7 2.8 3.7	<p>KS: Staying Well – Being spiritual, being social</p> <p>KS: Working with others – contributing to making the world a better place</p> <p>KS: Managing Information and Thinking: reflecting and evaluating my learning</p> <p>P: Engagement and participation: encourages participation, generates engagement and enthusiasm, and connects with life outside the school</p> <p>SOL 6: Appreciates and respects how diverse values, beliefs and traditions have contributed to the communities and culture in which she/he lives</p>

	<p><i>Note: If your school is a school that has two or more different founders associated with it, you can pick one of the religious congregations.</i></p> <p>Work to bring it all together: What does all that I/we have learnt tell me/us about our school community's current values? In what ways is our school continuing to live these values? What further action could our school take to live out these values even more?</p>		
2	<p>Our school is a Community of Faith</p> <p>All CEIST schools are Catholic schools. This means community is at the centre of all that we do.</p> <p>Critically examine the ways in your school is a 'community of faith' under the following headings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Early history of your school; when, where and how your school was founded - Values underpinning the founding of your school; the 'why' of your school - Gospel passages that inspired the founder's work - Current values especially in terms of working for a more just world - Prayer life of your school - Examples of the ways in which these values are lived in the life of your school e.g. through Code of Behaviour, extra-curricular activities in the life of the school, inclusion practices etc. - The Gospel passages that best summarise your school's values and why - Challenges to your school's values and how these challenges might be met now and into the future. 	<p>1.2 1.3 1.11 2.3 3.7</p>	<p>KS: Staying Well – Being spiritual, being social</p> <p>KS: Working with others – contributing to making the world a better place</p> <p>KS: Managing Information and Thinking: thinking creativity and critically</p> <p>KS: Managing Information and Thinking: Using digital technology to access, manage and share content</p> <p>SOL 5: Has an awareness of personal values and an understanding of the process of moral decision making</p>

	Work to bring it all together: Make a short video for your school's website and/or social media platforms, highlighting your school's values, where these values come from, and how they're lived today. Take this opportunity to communicate the very best of what you feel your school stands for.		
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Complete any 3 of the following project titles:

	Project	Learning outcomes (JC Specification)	Key skills (KS), Principles (P), statements of learning (SOLs) (Framework for Junior Cycle)
3	People of faith In every CEIST school there are people of faith working in your school and who have worked in your school in the past. Conduct two interviews with members of the congregation that founded your school or with people of faith who currently work in your school. Design your questions under these broad headings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Motivations - Joys and challenges - Future concerns and hopes - Spirituality - Favourite Gospel passage and why 	1.3 1.8 1.11 2.8 3.7	KS: Staying Well – Being spiritual, being social KS: Working with others – contributing to making the world a better place KS: Managing Information and Thinking: reflecting and evaluation my learning P: Engagement and participation encourages participation, generates engagement and enthusiasm, and connects with life outside the school SOL 5: Has an awareness of personal values

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Messages relating to religious faith that they think are important for young people to hear - Message for CEIST and for your school for the future <p>Work to bring it all together: write a letter of thanks to the two people you interviewed expressing your thanks and sharing what you learned from talking with them. Outline, in particular, if there was anything shared by the interviewee that had a personal impact on you and your own learning.</p>		<p>and an understanding of the process of moral decision making</p> <p>SOL 7: Values what it means to be an active citizen, with rights and responsibilities in local and wider contexts</p>
4	<p>Communities that pray together</p> <p>In our CEIST school, prayer that touches the hearts of the members of our school community is really important. Prayer that celebrates who we are as a school community is particularly important. Organising for this kind of prayer takes a lot of skill, energy and thought.</p> <p>Design, organise and run a prayer service for your class or the wider school community that expresses your school's values and mission. As part of the design element of this project, research how to organize a prayer service under these headings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The role of prayer in Christianity and ONE other religious tradition - Symbols: what they are, what they do - Religious images/iconography; what they communicate about God 	<p>1.8</p> <p>2.7</p>	<p>KS: Staying Well – Being spiritual, being social</p> <p>KS: Managing Information and Thinking: reflecting and evaluation my learning</p> <p>SOL 3: Creates, appreciates and critically interprets a wide range of text</p> <p>SOL 4: Creates and presents artistic works and appreciates the process and skills involved (artistic works here refer to images, the spoken word, music and the entire creative process).</p> <p>SOL 6: Appreciates and respects how diverse values, beliefs and traditions have</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Themes in religious ritual and their role in ‘holding’ the prayer together - Readings: Christian readings and readings from other religious traditions and from secular sources (e.g. poetry) - Music: the role music plays in religious services - Different types of prayers (e.g. petition, gratitude, praise etc.) - Personal testimony: what this does and how to do it - Who leads this kind of prayer - Prayer as motivating us to do good in our world - Examples of prayer rituals online that you can use to model what you want to achieve for your prayer <p>Then using this research create your short prayer service:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Symbols to be used that express the life of your school - Prayers - Scripture readings - Music - Words of wisdom and motivation <p>Work to bring it all together: write a personal reflection outlining what you learned about your school and the values underpinning your school from this process of research and action. In your reflection, also write about what you learned about prayer and the power of prayer to help a group understand itself, and to be inspired by shared faith.</p>		<p>contributed to the communities and culture in which she/he lives</p> <p>SOL 23: Brings an idea from conception to realization.</p>
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5	<p><i>Inspired not just by the past, but seeking to live just lives now and into the future</i></p> <p>Catholic schools are communities of faith, inspired by Jesus Christ, that seek to transform our world. Explore the ways in which Christian organisations, especially those associated with your school, have and continue to engage in addressing any one of the following areas of concern in our world today:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Poverty - Racism - Human Trafficking <p>In your research explore not only the ‘what’ of the work being done, but also the ‘why’. What motivates this work? Why does the community or organisation’s prayer life keep the members going in their work? What are the Gospel passages that matter to the work of the organisation in the pursuit of a more just way of living in our world? What are the aims and values of the organisation?</p> <p><i>Work to bring it all together:</i> Organise an awareness raising campaign on this issue for your school. Fundraising can be an optional part of this awareness raising, with your school’s permission. Your awareness raising activity should reach not only your school community but into your wider community.</p>	<p>1.3</p> <p>1.11</p> <p>2.7</p> <p>3.7</p>	<p>KS: Staying Well – Being spiritual, being social</p> <p>KS: Working with others – contributing to making the world a better place</p> <p>P: Engagement and participation: encourages participation, generates engagement and enthusiasm, and connects with life outside the school</p> <p>SOL 5: Has an awareness of personal values and an understanding of the process of moral decision making</p> <p>SOL 7: Values what it means to be an active citizen, with rights and responsibilities in local and wider contexts</p>
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6	<p><i>Our school and climate justice</i></p> <p>Probably the most important questions facing all of our lives are questions relating to climate justice. Related to this is the question of how we can transform anxiety into hope. In CEIST schools, working together in our care for our common home is vitally important.</p> <p>In 2015, Pope Francis wrote one of his most important encyclicals (or letter). It's called 'Laudato Si' and it talks about protecting our home; planet earth. For this project, find out more about this encyclical. Is the religious order with which your school is associated doing any work in this area here or in the developing world? Are any of the other founding congregations that form part of CEIST doing any work in this area?</p> <p>From your research answer these questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What is Laudato Si about? - What does the encyclical have to say about climate change? - What is Pope Francis calling all of us to do in terms of caring for our common home? - What does Pope Francis have to say about God and the creation of our world and the universe? What scripture passages are found in Laudato Si? What is the image of God found in Laudato Si? - Does Pope Francis have any particular message for young people? What might this message have to say to us about 'climate anxiety'? - What is the community/congregation associated with your school (or other CEIST 	2.3 3.8	<p>KS: Staying Well – Being spiritual, being social</p> <p>KS: Working with others – contributing to making the world a better place</p> <p>KS: Communicating – using digital technology to communicate</p> <p>KS: Working with others – contributing to making the world a better place</p> <p>P: Engagement and participation encourages participation, generates engagement and enthusiasm, and connects with life outside the school</p> <p>SOL 5: Has an awareness of personal values and an understanding of the process of moral decision making</p> <p>SOL 7: Values what it means to be an active citizen, with rights and responsibilities in local and wider contexts</p> <p>SOL 9: Understands the origins and impacts of social, economic and environmental aspects of the world around her/him</p>
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	<p>schools) doing about combating climate change and the effects of climate change?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Find out about some young people working on the issue of climate change in Ireland. If possible, try to connect with them to find out what motivates them in their activity. - Reflect on the concept of 'active hope'. What does this mean for you in your school? <p>Work to bring it all together: Pick four or five important quotations from Laudato Si. Your quotations should be simple enough to understand but also challenging enough to interest people. Ask students from different year groups to pick one quotation each and to design a poster for that quotation. If you wish you could make it a competition within the school. If you decide on a competition, do an awareness raising or advertising campaign for your competition. Invite a judging panel. Invite someone with expertise on Laudato Si to present prizes. Hang all entries around your school, as an awareness raising exercise. Don't forget to do a poster yourself as well! And of course, don't forget to advertise the results of the competition on your school's social media and other media platforms as well.</p> <p>Alternatively, you could hold a prayer vigil using these quotations for your local community on the theme of 'Care of our Common Home'.</p>		<p>SOL 24: Uses technology and digital media tools to learn, communicate, work and think collaboratively and creatively in a responsible and ethical matter</p>
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7	<p>Values that matter</p> <p>CEIST has a Charter. In this Charter, CEIST schools are challenged to live out important principles and values.</p> <p>Your values are the beliefs you have that lead you to behave in a certain way. Your school has certain values. Your school's values are reflected in your school's mission statement. Have a look at this mission statement under the following headings: (You can include other things in your project that are of interest to you as well as these headings).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What are the values underpinning this mission statement? - Where do these values come from? - What Gospel stories best reflect this mission statement in your view? - How is it lived out in your school? How are values reflected in how people treat one another in your school? - What are the other ways in which it could be lived out in your school? - Check out the CEIST Charter; how are your school's values connected to this document? 	1.11 3.3	<p>KS: Being Creative – exploring options and alternatives</p> <p>KS: Working with others – contributing to making the world a better place</p> <p>SOL 3: Creates, appreciates and critically interprets a wide range of texts</p> <p>SOL 24: Uses technology and digital media tools to learn, communicate, work and think collaboratively and creatively in a responsible and ethical matter</p>
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	<p>Work to bring it all together:</p> <p>Complete ONE of the following tasks:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Draw or paint a representation of your school's mission statement showing the values your school says are important in the life of your school. b. Put together a short video on your school's values and share this video, with permission on your school's social media accounts. c. Have a look at your school's <i>Code of Behaviour</i>. Assess the ways in which the <i>Code of Behaviour</i> reflects your school's mission statement and your school's values. Discuss your findings with your Principal and other Deputy Principal(s). Consider ways of sharing your reflections with your Student Council/Student Voice. 		
8	<p><u>Retreat</u> or pilgrimage</p> <p>Retreat</p> <p>A Class/Year Group Retreat is a sacred moment in your life as a student of a CEIST school. It's a time for you to get to know yourself better and to develop your friendships further. It is also, in a very particular way, an opportunity for you to get to know God better.</p>	<p>1.8</p> <p>2.8</p>	<p>KS: Staying Well – Being spiritual, being social</p> <p>KS: Working with others – contributing to making the world a better place</p> <p>KS: Communicating – using digital technology to communicate</p> <p>KS: Working with others – contributing to making the world a better place</p>

	<p>Work to bring it all together: Complete <u>one</u> of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. After your retreat, write a reflection on your own experience of the retreat. What did you learn about yourself, others and God? Why, in your opinion are experiences such as this, important for young people? b. After your retreat, write a blog for your school website or an article for your school newsletter on your experience (taking care of course not to breach any confidences shared during the experience). <p>Pilgrimage</p> <p>Ireland is a land that is full of holy places, pilgrim routes, holy wells, Mass rocks and so on. With your teacher, organise a pilgrimage to a holy place in your area. Before you go do some research on the place of pilgrimage. Who are the holy people associated with this holy place? What significant role did they play in your local area? Find out its history and its religious significance for the people of your community over through the ages. Your planning should also include organising, with your teacher, a short prayer service to be held at the holy site.</p>		<p>P: Engagement and participation: encourages participation, generates engagement and enthusiasm, and connects with life outside the school</p> <p>SOL 24: Uses technology and digital media tools to learn, communicate, work and think collaboratively and creatively in a responsible and ethical matter</p>
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	<p>Work to bring it all together:</p> <p>Complete <u>one</u> of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. After your pilgrimage, write a reflection on your own experience of the retreat. What did you learn about yourself, others and God. b. After your pilgrimage write a blog for your school website or an article for your school newsletter on your experience (taking care of course not to breach any confidences shared during the experience). Make sure to take photos of your pilgrimage for use in your blog or article! 		
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