Religious Education Policy

St. Michael’s College

A school, as part of its mission of the Church, should always allow its policies, its priorities and purposes, to be illuminated, inspired, guided and challenged by the teaching of the gospel.

(Sullivan, 2000)
Section One

Name
Towards a policy on Religious Education, St. Michael’s College, Dublin 4

Scope
This Religious Education policy will impact on the whole school community. The scope will reach:

- **Board of Management**
  To approve the policy and ensure its implementation.

- **Principal and Deputy Principal**
  To support the procedures of the policy and ensure its effective implementation.

- **School Staff**
  As teachers of St. Michael’s College, the hope is that the whole staff embraces and safeguards the ethos of the school and support the cross-curricular nature of Religious Education.

- **Teachers of Religious Education**
  To implement and review the policy.
  To ensure a high standard and effective delivery of Religious Education.

- **Chaplain and Chaplaincy Team**
  To assist in the faith development of students.

- **Core Care Team**
  To monitor the effects of the policy and to provide support and guidance to the students.

- **Parents / Guardians**
  To support the Religious Education Programme in the school and facilitate the faith formation of their children.

- **Students**
  To participate in the Religious Education Programme and to cultivate an openness to other religious traditions.
St. Michael’s College Mission Statement

St. Michael’s College is an Irish Catholic School, under the guidance of the Spiritan Congregation. Inspired by Christian ideals, we strive to create an environment in which the whole school community can achieve their social, intellectual, physical, emotional, cultural and spiritual potential in a friendly and caring atmosphere.
Our School Vision
Inspired by the vision of the Spiritan Founding Fathers, St. Michael’s College seeks to nurture:

- Openness to the Spirit
- High Educational Standards
- Concern for the Poor
- Develop a Sense of Community
- Promote a Global Vision
- Personal Development

Included with this, St. Michael’s College also strives to:

- Seek to live the Gospel values
- Recognise the dignity of each individual
- Contributes to the building of the local community
- Works for peace and justice in society

Aims of Religious Education
The Religious Education Programme at St. Michael’s College aims to carry out the following:

- To contribute to the religious development of our students.
- To develop care for the weak, co-operation between pupils, justice and fair play towards all, respect for truth, a passion for the environment and a love for learning.
- To provide opportunities to deepen sacramental awareness.
- To encourage our students to ask and seek answers to important questions.

Policy Rationale
As a Spiritan School, we are committed to the importance of formal religious and moral education. This policy allows us the opportunity to reflect on, explore and articulate what it means to be a Spiritan School. It is our hope and privilege to harness the religious development of our students and to provide opportunities for them to know their God. We strive to be faithful to the founding vision of our Spiritan Fathers, Francis Libermann and Claude Poulard Des Places and the implications of what it means to be a Catholic/Christian school.
Policy Goals
The goals of our policy are as follows:

- To ensure the status of Religious Education in St. Michael’s College.
- To promote the religious and overall development of the students.
- To appreciate the richness of religious tradition and to promote a framework to encounter these traditions.
- To lead to a greater degree of clarity in respect of aims, procedures and roles for Religious Education in St. Michael’s College.

Section Two

Policy Content
Policy content under the following headings:

1. Staffing
2. Curriculum and Resources
3. Staff Support and Development
4. Faith Formation and the Liturgical Year
5. Outreach Programmes
6. Parental and Parish Involvement

1. Staffing
We consider Religious Education to be such an integral part of our school ethos and school community, therefore it is imperative that we give it the status it deserves. That means looking at the appointment and selection of gifted teachers and the subject’s place on the school timetable and the allocation of class periods.

- We have dedicated and caring teachers who care for our students. Most of which have a high degree of training within Religious Education.
- There is a dedicated and effective Religious Education Co-ordinator, Ms. Mary Jo Delaney.
- Many of the Religious Education teachers are also members of the Chaplaincy Team, Co-ordinated by Mr. Oliver Doolan.
- Mr. Oliver Doolan and Mr. Aidan O’Donnell are also members of the Core Care Team who meet every second Monday.
- The Religion Department meet bi-monthly to plan and discuss their curriculum. Minutes are taken.
- Members of the Religious Education Department also take part in Inservice and Induction days as they arise.
2. Curriculum and Resources

The status of Religious Education in a school is reflected in the organisation of a set RE programme at both Junior and Leaving Certificate level - please see specific Religion Department Subject Plan. Our subject planning is also reflected on our school website and our Religion and Chaplaincy micro-sites. Some of the main features of our website are identified below.

The funding of resources may be a barometer of the priority ‘in action’. The Religion Department has an annual budget of up to €2,000 to spend on materials and resources. The religious identity of schools is not something that happens by accident. It is an identity that has evolved over time and is sustained by careful planning and the allocation of appropriate resources. The school timetable is as much an expression of school culture and ethos as it is of school resources. It is not a question of packing everything in but of establishing priorities. We feel that Religious Education is well reflected throughout this timetable.

Our Religion Department School Website - front page
3. Staff Support and Development
Effective Religious Education does not just happen spontaneously or accidentally. The very nature of the Religious Education class requires teachers of Religious Education to keep ‘upgrading’ and enhancing their teaching skills and resources. No other subject on the curriculum, it could be argued, has the same degree of visibility in a school. Religious Education permeates and pervades our entire school community.

- Religious Education is highly supported by Management in St. Michael’s College
- Outside the College we have had a great relationship with Ms. Orla Walsh, Faith Development Office (DEA) for the last five years. We have worked together on many projects, such as Faith Friends, Spiritan Youth Day, Inservice Days, Chaplaincy Meetings, JPII Awards etc.
- We have had a very good relationship with the many Archbishop’s House through his Advisors who visit the school each year.
- All teachers are encouraged to attend Inservices, as they arise in the Blackrock and Tallagh Education Centres and Kimmage Manor.
- All new teachers and HDip students of Religious Education at St. Michael’s College are given an induction to the programme.

4. Faith Formation and the Liturgical Year
We believe it is important that teachers who work in a school participate actively in the liturgical and sacramental life of the school. Students who witness and experience the concrete involvement of adults in the liturgical and sacramental life of the school will share more readily in the life of the school. Christian spirituality is promoted regularly throughout the school year.

- Liturgical seasons are marked throughout the school year. Corridors and classrooms are decorated. The Good Chap TV is used to mark occasions.
- Year and Class groups assembly regularly to marks events and sacraments during the year - St. Michael’s Day, Class Masses, Reconciliation Services.
- All staff are encouraged to attend and participate Liturgical celebrations.
- Each Year group has a Retreat during the year. This is funded by the school.
- Reflection and prayer is said at the opening Staff Meeting of the year.
- Prayer services and counselling is available in the event of a tragedy.
5. Outreach Programmes
The physical expression of the distinctiveness of our Spiritan School and the importance given to religious education is very evident in its visibility within and outside the school walls. Our Religious Education Programme always seek to be experiential through faith in action. This is why the following are some of the events promoted:

- Ghana Immersion Programme
- Lourdes with the Dublin Diocese
- Faith Friends Programme
- Events with students and SPIASI
- Events with the Life Centre, Pearse Street
- Liturgical Celebrations
- Choir
- Spiritan Youth Day
- JPII Awards
- Trocaire Fast
- Charitable Activities for each school Year
- Happy Hampers Appeal
- Christian Unity Week
- Retreat Hikes in Dublin Mountains and City Centre

6. Parental and Parish Involvement
Schools are most successful in achieving their religious goals when the school, home and parish mutually reinforce each other.

- Parents are informed of the aims, objectives and content of the Religious Education Programme through Parent/Teacher Meetings, Open Days, individual meetings, School Website
- A number of parents have been very active in teh Religious Education Programme through helping with Retreats, guest speakers, charity events
- We have a very good relationship with local churches (Merrion and Donnybrook). We also have a good relationship with the local Mosque and Jewish History Museum.

7. Inclusion
We have had a very good record of dealing with international students and students of various faiths. This has been highly supported through our understanding of what it means to be a Catholic School.
Section Three

Success Criteria
Policy Monitoring and Timeframe - Effective policy requires constant monitoring and evaluation to ensure successful implementation and to review what adjustments may be necessary from time to time. In order that the tasks of monitoring and evaluation are effective, consideration of the following may be helpful:

- The Religious Education Department will monitor policy implementation.
- Good communication between Religious Education Department and School Management.
- At the end of each year, the Religious Education Department meet to evaluate the success of the policy implementation.
- Apart from the usual on-going informal monitoring that would occur with every area of policy, formal monitoring would be appropriate at least twice in the first year and at least once during each subsequent year.

This policy will come into effect on ________________________

It will be reviewed after _____________ year/s.