

Holy Family Secondary School



Religious Education / Faith Formation Policy

1. Link to Mission Statement
2. Rationale
3. Objectives of the Policy
4. Aims of Religious Education and Faith Formation
5. Curriculum Aims
6. Subject Provision
7. Attendance
8. Team
9. Staff Support and Development
10. Chaplaincy Services
11. Reflection days/events
12. Sacred Space
13. Youth Ministry (Holy Family Youth, Pope John Paul II Awards)
14. Parental and parish involvement
15. Faith Formation and the Liturgical Year

Appendix 1: Policy Review Timeline

Ratified by Board of Management on: 13th March 2018

Proposed Next Policy Review date: Subject to ongoing review

Chairperson, Board of Management
Mr Feargal Whyte

Secretary, Board of Management
Mrs Angela Ryan

Representative of the Trustee

1. Mission Statement

Religious Education is taught in Holy Family Secondary School by Teaching Council registered trained Religion teachers. This policy has been developed in line with our mission statement which is as follows:

“We promote the Christian virtues of faith, hope, love, gentleness, respect and tolerance, and we emphasise togetherness and family. Guided by these Christian virtues, and dedicated to the pursuit of excellence, it is our mission to provide a safe, caring, inclusive learning environment in which to foster the spiritual, intellectual, academic, aesthetic, physical, emotional and social development of each pupil so that she may fulfil her own unique potential and may leave our school with the capacity and willingness to contribute to the building of a society characterised by these Christian virtues.”

The policy content herein must be interpreted and understood in conjunction within the policies framework of Holy Family Secondary School. The policy also operates within a legislative framework and takes account of the following;

- *The Education Act, 1998*
- *The Education Welfare Act, 2000*
- *Equal Status Act, 2000*
- *The Equality Act, 2004*
- *Children First Act, 2015*
- *HFSS Child Safeguarding Statement*
- *HFSS Vetting Policy*

2. Rationale

Holy Family is a Catholic, girls-only, all-ability, diocesan day school, under the patronage of the Bishop of Kildare and Leighlin. The school has a very strong Catholic ethos, which is lived out within the school. It models itself on the words and example of Jesus and the founder of the Holy Family Order, Pierre Bienvenu Noailles. The motto in the school is to ‘Be Family and to Build Family’. The result of this is a school which creates a loving, holistic, and caring environment for both students and staff. As a Catholic school, academic progress and excellence are very important, however, there is a greater emphasis placed on meeting the needs of all aspects of the student. Faith Formation is regarded as central to the school’s philosophy.

3. Objectives of the Religious Policy

- To ensure the status of Religious Education in the school.
- To promote the religious and overall development of the students.
- To appreciate the richness of religious traditions and to provide 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 Holy Family Secondary School.

4. Aims of Religious Education

The “general aim of Religious Education is to awaken people to faith and to help them throughout their lives to deepen and strengthen that faith”¹

¹ Religious Education Syllabus 1992, p.4.

The personal faith of the students in Holy Family Secondary School is nourished when they are offered the opportunity to participate with questions of meaning and to discover a variety of responses to these questions.

The fundamental principles which govern the Religious Education and Faith Formation of HFSS students may be stated as follows:

Religious Education and Faith Formation:

- Equip students for responsible citizenship by helping them to cope with and engage constructively in a pluralist society.
- Opens students and teachers to the possibility of being more fully in touch with their own faith life.
- Enables students to take their religious understanding to new levels, not just of study, but of commitment and responsibility.
- Calls all students to respond to God with love and appreciation through experiences such as prayer and worship.
- Prepares young people to live in community and to participate actively in their life and mission of the church.
- Prepares students to live as followers of Jesus in their professional lives.
- Respects the individual student
Encourages students to question the world around them.
Strengthens the faith of the student in their understanding of the Catholic tradition.
- Enables students to tell their story of her faith community.
- Stimulates open, inclusive attitudes among students of different social, ethnic and religious backgrounds.
- Understands and appreciates the family nature of religious education
- Deepens the students' knowledge of faith, providing an opportunity for them to explain their faith to others.

5. Aims of the Curriculum

Religious Education is a non-exam subject in Holy Family Secondary School. This enables students to develop their faith within an inclusive environment, one that sees all aspects of the student develop, not just the academic side. This approach encourages intellectual religious development, while delivering a solid knowledge foundation which gives students a perceptible purpose which is on the same lines as other disciplines taught. We endeavour to invite students to announce the message of Christ to the whole world while embracing respectful dialogue between those of other faiths.

As a Catholic school, Holy Family Secondary School is further guided in our approach to Religious Education by a publication of the Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference, 'Guidelines for the Faith Formation and Development of Catholic Students studying the State Syllabus'.

In this document, nine additional aims of a faith formational approach to the Junior Certificate syllabus in particular are cited. As a result of studying the syllabus, students will be enabled:

- To become aware of their own identity and worth as human beings who are created in the image of God and are in need of redemption from sin.
- To develop an awareness of the spiritual dimension of human life, of the mystery of God, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit as understood in the Trinitarian concept of Catholic teaching and revelation.

- To interpret the events and experiences of life through a better understanding of what it means to be a Catholic Christian.
- To learn by guidance and example how better to express their relationship with God, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit.
- To deepen their sense of belonging to the Church; to participate more fully in the Church's liturgy and life, prayer, worship and retreats.
- To acquire the virtues of the Christian life through social justice issues based on praxis, by developing a sense of solidarity with others in the service of humankind.
- To have ever greater respect for, and appreciation of, Sacred Scripture and to act in accordance with the values of the Gospel by bringing its truth to the world.
- To understand the teaching of the Church and its relevance to the questions, problems, aspirations and hopes of the modern world.
- To understand faith perspectives other than their own and the values and beliefs of those that don't espouse any religious affiliation.²

6. Subject Provision

Religious Education is a core subject which all students are encouraged to study. Parents are informed during the enrolment interview that Holy Family Secondary School is a Catholic school and that their daughter will attend the religious services.

Number of class periods in each year:

- Two x one hour teaching periods at Junior Cycle
- Two x one hour teaching periods at Transition Year
- Two x one hour teaching periods at Senior Cycle (Fifth and Sixth year)

7. Attendance in Religious Education

Our ethos is at the heart of all we do in Holy Family Secondary School; attendance in Religious Education classes is encouraged as it plays a pivotal role in the development of each student. The importance of attending Religious Education classes is clearly stated to the parent(s) / guardian(s) of incoming students pre-decision to enrol at HFSS.

8. Religious Education / Faith Formation Team

Teachers of Religious Education / Faith Formation in Holy Family Secondary School are required to possess qualifications in the subject that satisfy the Teaching Council and the Diocesan authorities. This ensures that "the effectiveness of religion classes is enhanced when entrusted to those teachers who are committed to the faith, professionally qualified to teach religion, and willing to do so."³

² *Guidelines for the Faith Formation and Development of Catholic Students*, Page 6.

³ *Guidelines for the Formation and Development of Catholic students*.

9. Staff Support and Development

Effective Religious Education does not just happen spontaneously. Holy Family Secondary School encourages teachers of Religious Education to continue their professional development and a folder listing the CPD that has been carried out is kept in the chaplaincy office. Religious Education and Faith Formation permeates the entire school community.

Holy Family Secondary School has exceptionally strong links to the convent beside the school. The Holy Family Sisters opened the secondary school on the 7th September 1959. The same doors welcomed the first students of the Holy Family Sisters in 1875. In 1992, the Holy Family Sisters handed over the ownership of the school to the Diocese of Kildare and Leighlin. As far as possible, the Sisters will maintain contact with the school by providing a school chaplain. This is continued today, as our school chaplain plays an imperative role within the school and is seen by management, staff and students as the incontrovertible heart of Holy Family Secondary School.

The chaplaincy team meet weekly to discuss upcoming and current services and events that will be held within the school. The aims of these meetings are to inform the Religious Education team of any Liturgical season that should be discussed within the classroom, follow up on the Pope John Paul II Award participants, correspondence with the Diocesan Advisor, plan and organise school reflections, Catholic Schools Week, and church services.

10. Chaplaincy Services:

Chaplaincy at Holy Family Secondary School is about expressing faith through both prayer and action. Our aim is to encourage pupils in discovering their faith, support them in engaging with their faith by putting it into action. All chaplaincy activities are supported by our school Chaplain, our Lay Chaplains and teaching staff.

The Role of the Chaplain is of great importance. “The Chaplain is a faith presence, committed to the values of Christ, and on behalf of the Church and school community, accompanies each person on the journey through life.⁴ There is a big emphasis on pastoral care in the school. As a result, a very loving and caring atmosphere exists. While academic progress and results are very important in the school, there is a greater emphasis placed on meeting the needs of the whole person.

The chaplaincy team is responsible for organising liturgies and prayer services throughout the year, leading school reflections, marking the major Christian feasts that take place during the school year and participating in activities that relate to the well-being and development of the school community. The chaplaincy team work closely with the Holy Family Youth Group who are a faith based group in 5th year and with the 4th year girls working towards achieving the Pope John II Award.”⁵

An important aspect of the role involves co-ordinating with the priests and pastoral workers in the local parish in organising Eucharistic Ministry training, the celebration of Catholic Schools Week, charity events and The Faith Friends Programme.

The role of the school chaplain can be stated as follows:

- To work as part of the R.E. team.
- To liaise with the Sacramental Chaplain and to be a contact person for parishes.
- To celebrate Morning Prayer on the intercom at special times during the school year (e.g. Catholic Schools Week)
- To co-ordinate all liturgies during the school year.

⁴ L. Monahan and C. Renehan, *The Chaplain: A Faith Presence in the School Community*, (Dublin: Columba, 1988) Page 13.

⁵ Naughton, M.L., *The Role Of The Lay Chaplain In Carrying Out The Mission Of The Church*, (Mater Dei) Chapter Three, Page 2.

- Provide reflection time for Junior Cycle students and Senior Cycle students.
- To encourage new Ministers of the Eucharist.
- To explore ways of responding to students who have been bereaved or have an illness.
- To create Sacred Spaces highlighting the different liturgical seasons
- To respond to the spiritual needs of the student as they arise during the year.
- To take responsibility for the prayer space.

11. Reflection days/events

Year group reflection days (retreats) are spiritual experiences that recognise and acknowledge the human context of the students but go beyond this to the faith context.⁶ All reflection experiences offered in this school are heavily encouraged to all students. Our Reflection Days are facilitated by our school chaplain and our Religious Education team. They provide an atmosphere for prayer and reflection. The emphasis of reflection days is to build a sense of community and to provide an opportunity for students to reflect on various aspects of their growth as spiritual beings. This includes experiences of music, prayer and ritual that enhance their understanding and support them as they journey toward adulthood.

12. Sacred Space:

The sacred space in Holy Family Secondary School is the oratory, located at the heart of the school. This sacred space enables students and staff a space for quiet reflection and prayer, meditation, contemplation and a pause during a busy day. This sacred space is frequently used by the Religion Department.

13. Holy Family Youth (HFY):

Holy Family Youth are a faith based group which dates back to 1820 in Bordeaux, France. Today in our school, Holy Family Youth (HFY) are an⁷ energetic group of 5th and 6th year pupils who dedicate themselves to “living out their Catholic / Christian faith within the school community, at home and in their local parish. The motto of Holy Family Youth is “Live my faith through positive action. Spread the good news of Jesus. Be family and build family.” HFY work directly with 1st and 2nd years in the school. They plan and lead special programmes of welcome and support for 1st and 2nd year students at the beginning and at different stages throughout the year.” They introduce the first years to school life; helping them with the timetables, lockers and layout of the school, and they are a constant source of help for First and Second year students. HFY members also play an important role in leading part of the first year Reflection Day.

14. Pope John Paul II Awards:

The Pope John Paul II Award enables students to take an active part in the life of their Church and their community. It enables Holy Family students to become more aware of the teaching and role of the Catholic Church in the world and to engage at a deep level with Christ. Pope John Paul II leaders make every effort to entice students to connect with their local parish. The chaplaincy team assist students in the realisation that they have a special role to play within the parish community. Each year, Transition Year students are invited to participate in the award and they spend the next twelve months dividing their time in volunteering in their local parish church and community. Students have the option of completing either the Bronze, Silver or Gold Award. When Holy Family Students complete their Gold Award, they can progress to complete the Papal Cross Award, which involves 26 hours of both Parish involvement and Social Awareness.

⁶ L. Monahan and C. Renehan, *The Chaplain: A Faith Presence in the School Community*, (Dublin: Columba, 1988) Page 90.

⁷ Naughton, M.L., *The Role Of The Lay Chaplain In Carrying Out The Mission Of The Church*, (Mater Dei) Chapter Three, Page 7

15. Parental and parish involvement

Schools are most successful in achieving their religious goals when the school, home and parish work in unison. Religion teachers in the school can keep in contact with parents during Open Nights, Parents Teacher meetings and other school events when they are invited into the school's sacred space and can speak to any member of the Religious Education team.

16. Faith Formation and the Liturgical Year

All Liturgical seasons are marked in the school. Notice boards in the foyer, outside the oratory, and outside the chaplaincy office are decorated, designed to mark the Liturgical season. For example, religion classes during the month of November remember the people we have lost, say prayers and visit the church to pray and leave notes of remembrance to be blessed by the priest during services at the weekends. Time is allocated at the beginning of every staff meeting for reflection and prayer in which we ask the Lord to guide us to make the right decisions.

Appendix I: Policy Review Timeline

HFSS SCHOOL POLICY REVIEW:

YEAR OF REVIEW:

Ongoing and/or academic 2021-2022

PROCESS STAGE	DATE	NOTES
Identification Primary Planning Meeting	October 2017	The Chaplaincy team identified the framework for this policy in consultation with the SMT
Scoping document (DRAFT 1)	October 2017	With SMT
Circulation of discussion document to focus group (staff) (DRAFT 2)	December 2017	
Circulation of discussion document to staff (DRAFT 3)	February 2018	
Consultation with HFSS SRC, Senior Prefect Team, Parents' Association (DRAFT 3)	February 2018	
Review by Planning Team (DRAFT 4)	February 2018	Draft to the BOM February 2018
Consultation with Board of Management (FINAL DRAFT)	13 th March 2018	
Ratification date (BOM)	13 th March 2018	
Implementation date		Effective from date ratified by BOM