



**St. Joseph's Secondary School, Castlebar.  
Faith Development-Religious Education Policy**

**Mercy philosophy of Education**

Inspired by the vision of Catherine McAuley, Mercy Education is committed to holistic development and to the achievement of the full potential of each student, particularly those who are disadvantaged or marginalised. It is a process informed and influenced by the teaching and example of Jesus Christ and is conducted in an atmosphere of care, respect and joy. Mercy Education is committed to ongoing whole school development in collaboration and partnership with the Board of Management, Staff, Parents/Guardians and the wider community.

**CEIST Core Values**

The Core Values of CEIST are:

- Promoting Spiritual & Human Development
- Achieving Quality in Teaching and Learning
- Showing Respect for Every Person
- Being Just and Responsible

**Mission Statement**

St. Joseph's Secondary School Castlebar, Co.Mayo is a voluntary Catholic Secondary School for girls under the trusteeship of CEIST (Catholic Education an Irish Schools' Trust). We aim to provide a holistic Christian Education in co-operation with staff, students, parents/guardians, Board of Management and the Community. We work to create equality for all in an atmosphere of mutual respect. We strive to excellence in learning and endeavour to help each student to reach her full potential in a positive, caring and happy environment.

**School Ethos**

The characteristic spirit of St. Joseph's Secondary School, Castlebar is based on the Mercy Philosophy of Education which espouses the core values of respect, justice, care and joy. The School's Ethos is holistic and person centred. The school encourages students to use and share their talents to their full potential, to recognise God's presence in their lives, to celebrate their Christian faith and to show respect to all persons in all areas of life and work. Students are encouraged by school staff to strive for excellence in learning and to participate to the best of their ability in all aspects of school life.



### **Scope of the Policy**

This policy will impact on students, staff, parents/guardians 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 community.

### **Aims:**

- To contribute to the religious formation and faith development of our students and their spiritual and moral development.
- To nourish the life of students, staff and parents as they work together for the common good, respecting each other's rights
- To carry out responsibilities in a manner which promotes the spiritual development of each person
- To achieve quality in teaching and learning that creates a sense of community founded on compassion and justice.

### **Rationale**

The rationale of the Faith Formation Policy/Religious Education Policy of St. Joseph's Secondary School is based on the CEIST charter and on the characteristic spirit of Catherine McCauley and the education philosophy of the Mercy Congregation.

The Policy 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 others 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.
- To encourage participation in liturgical activities.

### **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. Students are expected to attend and participate fully in the religious education



programme of the school. Religious education is a core subject on the school curriculum and an integral part of the ethos of the school.

Exemptions can only be made following consultation with the school management and a formal application by parents to the Board of Management. Parents may be asked to make other supervision arrangements for their daughter during this class period.

### **Relationship to other Policies**

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

### **Content**

- All classes are offered timetabled religious education per week. (a minimum of 2-3 classes per week).
- Classes follow Department of Education Religious Education N.C.C.A. syllabi.
- Liturgies and para liturgies are celebrated throughout the school year.
- The school has a prayer room which is open throughout the day for use by students and staff.
- A Sacred space is also situated in a prominent place in the school. This space changes according to the liturgical calendar.
- Social awareness projects are encouraged and facilitated.

### **Roles and Responsibilities**

#### **Board of Management**

- To commit to, to promote and to support the Catholic Ethos of the school.
- To ensure that there is a written policy.
- To approve the policy and ensure its implementation.

#### **Principal/Deputy Principal**

- To monitor and implement the policy.

#### **Staff**

- To engage in the implementation and cultivation of a culture of faith in the 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 student support 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.
- To encourage and support their children in their faith formation.
- To encourage participation in formal and informed religious education activities.

**Students**

- To participate fully in formal time-tabled classes.
- To participate in extra-curricular religious education activities.

**Monitoring, Evaluation and Review**

- The policy will be reviewed at the end of each academic year by the R.E. Department.
- Every third year a whole staff review will take place to ensure that the Ethos is being effectively carried into the future by the whole school community.

**Monitoring & Review**

This policy was ratified by Board of Management at its meeting on:	
_____	
This Policy is operational from: _____	
_____	_____
Mr. John Caulfield Chairperson of Board of Management	Ms. Marie Mac Cabe Principal