**Religious Education Policy:**

**School Name:** Edmund Rice Secondary School, Carrick-on-Suir.

**School Address:** Mount St. Nicholas, Carrick-on- Suir, Co. Tipperary.

**School Details:** ERSS Carrick-on-Suir is a Voluntary Roman Catholic Secondary School under the trusteeship and the patronage of the Edmund Rice Schools Trust. The School is grant aided by the Department of Education & Skills and is a single sex (boys) school.

**School Management:** The Board of Management of ERSS Carrick-on-Suir is a statutory Board appointed pursuant to the provisions of the Education Act 1998.

**Mission Statement:**

 Inspired by its founder, ERSS Carrick-on-Suir’s mission is to “*To provide a caring Christian community which celebrates effort and talent in an environment of hope and happiness"* , with a vision to *“Learn together, succeed together in a respectful environment.”*

**Ethos**:

As an Edmund Rice School ERSS Carrick-on-Suir seeks to promote the five key elements of an Edmund Rice School as espoused by the ERST Charter:

● Nurturing faith, Christian spirituality and Gospel-based values

● Promoting partnership in the school community

● Excelling in teaching and learning

● Creating a caring school community

● Inspiring transformational leadership

Please Note:

Personal data collected about prospective students/students and their parents/guardians will be retained and used strictly in accordance with the provisions of GDPR legislation as introduced 25th. May 2018. Further details on data protection are set out in the school’s Data Protection Policy.

**Introduction**

ERSS Carrick on Suir is a voluntary secondary school under the trusteeship of the Edmund Rice Schools Trust (ERST), for boys only. The policy is informed by the ERST Charter. The capacity of the school is approximately 320 students. Our policy is to enhance the educational growth of our students in their intellectual, spiritual, social, artistic, moral and sporting development. The policy is implemented within the context of our Mission Statement:

**Policy on Religious Education in ERST Catholic Schools**

Rationale for the policy As an ERST Catholic 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 Christian Brothers / Edmund Rice 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 intention of Edmund Rice and the implications of what it means to be a Catholic school in this Edmund Rice tradition in the third millennium Ireland.

**Goals and objectives of the policy**

• To provide positive experiences and opportunities for the growth of interpersonal relationships.

• To ensure the status of Religious Education (RE) 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 RE in the school.

**Scope of the Policy**

 As an ERST Catholic School this RE policy will impact on the whole school community. The Board of Management will approve the policy and ensure its implementation. The Principal and Deputy Principal will support the procedures of the policy and ensure its effective implementation.

As teachers in an ERST catholic school, the aim is that the whole staff embrace and safeguard the ethos of the school and support the cross-curricular nature of RE. The Teachers of Religious Education will implement and review the policy to ensure a high standard and effective delivery of RE.

The Chaplain will assist in the faith development of students, accompany and to befriend students on their journey through their school life, reflect and pray together.

Pastoral Care Personnel (Class Tutors/ Guidance Counsellor) will monitor the effects of the policy and to provide support and guidance to students.

Parents/Guardians are expected to support the RE Programme in the school and to facilitate the faith formation of their children. Students are expected participate fully in the RE Programme and to cultivate an openness to other religious traditions and to enjoy the search for truth together. Students with special educational needs are catered for insofar as resources, supported by the Department of Education and Skills (DES) will allow.

**Nature of Religious Education**

As a Catholic school RE is a core subject on the school curriculum and an integral part of the ethos of the school. RE is provided for students in accordance with the doctrines, practices and traditions of the Catholic Church that derives its thrust and ultimate foundation from the person of Christ. RE has nothing in common with indoctrination that amounts to teaching a student a religious way of behaving and believing or trying to ‘convert’ to Catholicism. This type of teaching deliberately harms students by undermining their natural ability to reason. In contrast, as a school we are committed to the deepest respect for both faith and reason as they contribute significantly to the formation of rational and mature citizens of a democratic society.

Three types of learning in RE are evident in our school:

**Learning into religion**

Students are provided with religious instruction and experience, such as prayer and sacramental participation that will help them to grow into their faith and in their understanding of the Catholic tradition.

**Learning about religion**

While particular focus is given to Christianity, students are exposed to a broad range of religious traditions and to the non-religious interpretation of life. Such a broad exposure seeks to develop in students powers of tolerance, mutual understanding and the skills needed to engage in meaningful dialogue with those of other, or of no religious traditions.

**Learning from Religion**

Students evaluate both what has been learned and how it has impacted on their lived commitments. Students are invited to learn from what they are discovering. The RE that the school provides is open to, and inclusive of, all students of all faiths and those of none.

**Vision of an ERST Catholic School**

Inspired by the vision of Edmund Rice, our school:

• Seeks to live by Gospel values

• Recognises the dignity of each individual

• Has a special concern for the poor and under-privileged

• Is challenged to develop a curriculum which promotes the harmonious growth of the whole person.

• Contributes to the building up of the local community by working for peace and justice in society so that the school becomes a beacon of faith.

**Aims of Religious Education:**

• To foster good relationships between pupils themselves, between pupils and teachers, and the school community and God.

• To contribute to the religious development of our students.

• To develop care for the vulnerable, foster justice and fairness towards all, respect for truth, co-operation between pupils, 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; to come to know and to love Christ.

**Staffing**

We consider RE to be an integral part of our school ethos and school community. That means looking at the appointment and selection of qualified teachers and its place on the school timetable and the allocation of class periods.

• Students are taught by teachers with specialist qualifications

• RE Coordinator

• Part-time chaplain

• Term meetings of RE teachers as a department and as necessary in preparation for liturgies/events. The aim of the meetings is review RE policy and to plan for events.

• There is an Ethis coordinator as part of the middle management of the school

• New RE staff are supported and briefed where necessary.

•All new RE are supported and mentored in the ethos of the school.

**Staff Support and Development**

 Effective RE requires complex planning and organisation. The very nature of the RE class requires teachers 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. RE permeates and pervades the entire school community.

• Financial support for RE related activities.

• Chaplain part of school trips.

• Whole staff support for liturgies etc.

• Full school commitment and appreciation of the ethos,

•The quality of relationships within the school.

• Edmund Rice Advocacy work

• Gaisce Awards

• Diocesan Day for Teachers of RE

• In-service training where applicable

**Faith Formation and the Liturgical Year**

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. We endeavour to promote a Christian spirituality in our schools.

**Liturgical Year / School Year**

• Opening mass – September

• November - Mass for the dead/Remembrance Service

• Advent /Carol service and First Year Christmas Mass (includes Parents)

• Lent - distribution of Ashes

• May 5th - Edmund Rice Feast Day

• Each individual year group has the opportunity to engage in faith formation throughout the liturgical year.

• Critical incident management team

• All class pupils have the option of attending funeral of parent/ close relative of fellow pupil.

• Westcourt - available for reflection days with Chaplain.

• Zambia Immersion Project

• Catholic Schools Week

• Retreats

• Exam masses

**Outreach Programmes**

The physical expression of the distinctiveness of a school and the importance given to RE is nowhere more evident and obvious than in its visibility within the school walls. RE should always seek to be experiential, through faith in action and cross curricular. This is evident in the following programmes:

• Zambia Immersion Project

• Edmund Rice Awards

 • Collections for various charities

• Volunteers for Lourdes • Community Care Programme in TY

• Concern Fast

• 1:1 Computer Classes for elderly citizens

• Carol singing in local nursing home

• Young Social Innovators Programme with TYs

• Saint Vincent de Paul Hamper Appeal

• Lourdes Diocesan Pilgrimage

• A programme of Guest Speakers

**Parental and Parish Involvement**

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

• Parents’ Council

• Parent -Teacher Meetings to include meeting with RE teachers of exam religion.

• Information meetings for. parents - (emphasis on aims/goals of each year group and ERSS)

• Local Parish Priest - Chaplain.

**Inclusion**

As a school we strongly recommend that every student study RE. To date we have not had an incident of a student not willing to attend RE class. However the school respects the rights of parents to request their son to be exempt from participation in RE classes. The manner in which such a withdrawal will be facilitated will be related to available resources within the school and complies with the school’s policies on curriculum, supervision and child safeguarding.

A discussion group of the school stakeholders will meet to determine an agreeable framework in the event a student refuses to participate in RE.

**Approval:**

This policy has been distributed to staff, parents and students for their approval.

Amendments have been made after consultation with these stakeholders.

This policy has been ratified by the Board of Management of ERSS Carrick-on-Suir;

Chairperson: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

This policy will be due for review on:

Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_