

DIOCESE OF MAITLAND-NEWCASTLE POLICY ON THE CLASSROOM TEACHING OF RELIGION (K-12)

1. Rationale

- 1.1 Catholic Schools, in collaboration with parents and parishes, participate in the mission of the Church in the Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle, providing a broad experience of the living Catholic Christian tradition.
- 1.2 The current generation of parents, teachers and students has been formed in a society characterised by a plurality of cultures and beliefs. This and a wide range of other influences combine to complicate and challenge Catholic Schools today.
- 1.3 One way in which teachers in Catholic Schools seek to integrate Catholic faith and culture is by means of Religious Education. While there is a distinct but complementary relationship between Religious Education generally and the specific classroom teaching of Religion, it is the latter which forms the focus of this policy
- 1.4 The classroom teaching of Religion has had Diocesan-approved statements of content for some time. However, current expectations regarding the teaching of Religion, developments in curriculum, and the need to accommodate ideas expressed in the Catechism of the Catholic Church call for a clear policy on the *Classroom Teaching of Religion (K-12)*.
- 1.5 In this context and that of students' growth and development, the Catholic School offers a systematic approach to the classroom teaching of Religion. This incorporates best teaching practice with a characteristic set of aims, learning outcomes, content, strategies, resources and assessment as rigorous and as challenging as those of other curriculum areas.

2. Aims

- 2.1 This diocesan policy provides a framework to enhance or promote knowledge and understanding of the traditions of the Catholic Community: its story, its experiences and its teachings, through the following four strands: **Jesus and Scripture, History and Beliefs, Celebration and Prayer, Justice and Morality.**
- 2.2 Thus, the diocese supports each school in the *Classroom Teaching of Religion* as it aims to:
 - 2.2.1 Encourage students to find meaning and excitement in learning about the story, experiences and teachings of the Catholic Christian tradition.
 - 2.2.2 Enable students to be more articulate and thoughtful about the Catholic Christian tradition and its place within the religious and cultural diversity of Australian society.
 - 2.2.3 Encourage informed participation of students in the Catholic Church Community.
 - 2.2.4 Enable students to know, understand and integrate Gospel values such as compassion, forgiveness, hope and justice in daily life.

3. Implementation

The following elements are required for inclusion within each school's policy for the Classroom Teaching of Religion:

3.1 Program documentation and assessment

- 3.1.1 The Diocesan **Religion Syllabus (K-12)**, is mandatory for every Catholic school in the diocese.
- 3.1.2 A policy for the *Classroom Teaching of Religion* is to be developed in each school, based on this diocesan policy and the diocesan **Religion Syllabus (K-12)**.
- 3.1.3 Religion programs are documented in a manner consistent with the diocesan *Programming Policy*.
- 3.1.4 Religion is to be assessed and reported in terms of stage outcomes, similar to other KLAs.

3.2 Personnel and Qualifications

- 3.2.1 Each school is to have a person appointed who is responsible for the coordination of the Religion program. (Religious Education Coordinator/Facilitator/Religious Studies Coordinator.)
- 3.2.2 Religion classes are taught by committed Catholics with an awareness of Catholic tradition and culture.
- 3.2.3 The contribution of teachers of other denominations or traditions is always valued and recognised.
- 3.2.4 Selection of teachers reflects the importance of the classroom teaching of Religion.
- 3.2.5 All newly appointed permanent teachers are to complete the basic *Religious Education Certificate* or its equivalent in the first years of teaching.
- 3.2.6 Religion teachers are encouraged to participate in some relevant professional development courses each school year.
- 3.2.7 Those teaching Religion are expected to gain accreditation by undertaking the diocesan Religious Education Certificate or its equivalent.
- 3.2.8 It is highly desirable that Religious Education/Studies Coordinators complete the minimum requirement of the Graduate Diploma in Religion/Religious Education.
- 3.2.9 Diocesan support and consideration will be given to those doing post graduate studies in Religion/Religious Education.
- 3.2.10 Newly appointed executive members are to have completed the minimal requirement of the diocesan *Religious Education Certificate* or its equivalent.

3.3 Time Allocation

- 3.3.1 An average of thirty minutes a day is allocated to the classroom teaching of Religion. This may vary slightly in Years 11 and 12.
- 3.3.2 Timetabling needs to reflect the importance of the teaching of Religion.

3.4 Resources

- 3.4.1 Resource materials for implementing the diocesan **Religion Syllabus (K-12)** are to be further developed at diocesan level.

4. Budget

- 4.1 Each year an appropriate school budget is to be allocated for the *Classroom Teaching of Religion* reflecting this policy and the priorities of the diocese.
- 4.2 Diocesan and local budgets should support the appropriate professional development of all staff.

5. Evaluation

- 5.1 The evaluation of the *Classroom Teaching of Religion* includes: student participation, assessment of student learning outcomes, and teacher presentation of the Catholic tradition.
- 5.2 Evaluation of the overall aims of the *Classroom Teaching of Religion* occurs informally at all times.
- 5.3 However, the end of a unit of work, term or year provides opportunities for more specific student and staff evaluation of the *Classroom Teaching of Religion*.
- 5.4 School Evaluation and Development (SEVDEV) which occurs regularly, gathers feedback from teachers, parents and others who make commendations and recommendations concerning the Classroom Teaching of Religion.
- 5.5 This diocesan policy is to be reviewed every four/five years.

*Note: Given that this policy deals with the explicit teaching of classroom Religion it seems evident that a diocesan/local statement of the distinct but complementary **Identity/Religious Dimension of Catholic Schools** may be necessary.*

SOURCES

Catechesi Tradendae, (1979)
Step Out in Faith: Primary, (1992)
In the Light of the Gospel: Secondary, (1993)
General Directory for Catechesis, (1998)
The Catholic School on the Threshold of the New Millennium, (1998)
Australian Religious Education - Facing the Challenges (NCEC, 1999)
Religion Syllabus (K-12) (Draft, 2000)