



# McAuley Catholic Central School

## **Religious Education Policy**

# **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION POLICY**

## **Related Policies**

Religious Education Accreditation to Work, Teach and Lead in Catholic Education in the Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn

Religious Education Coordinator: Role and Responsibilities, Employment and Professional Development

## **Rationale/Purpose**

Religious Education is the making accessible of the traditions of the religious community and the making manifest of the intrinsic connection between traditions and transformation.

Therefore, in a Catholic School, the term 'Religious Education' refers to all aspects of learning about religion (the classroom teaching and learning program), as well as the processes of teaching students to be religious, thus enabling them to respond in faith through opportunities for faith growth and spiritual formation in the religious life of the school.

Religious Education is a lifelong process to which Catholic schooling contributes. All parts of Religious Education – all learning which is planned, guided and implemented by the school – are designed to ensure that the student knows, understands and values the living faith tradition and mission of the Catholic Church. This lies at the heart of Catholic Education, defining its culture, its curriculum and its classroom based Religion programs which aim to:

- develop an appreciation of the love of God revealed through the person of Jesus Christ, the wonders of God's creation and the dignity of the human person
- promote growth in self-knowledge and in knowledge of the life, faith and mission of the Catholic Church
- increase understanding of the nature of religion and of different religions
- foster skills of reflection, discernment, critical thinking, judging and deciding how to act in accordance with conscience
- develop the capacity to critique the surrounding culture in the light of the Catholic Faith and Tradition.

This policy describes the elements of Religious Education that contribute to the Catholic School being a religious school where evangelisation, catechesis, Catholic religious literacy and the teaching of an effective religion curriculum (Treasures New and Old) contribute to the distinctive Catholic character of the school enabling students to learn about religion and enabling students to learn to be religious.

This policy will provide guidelines for the implementation of Religious Education in Catholic Schools in the Archdiocese through:

- the classroom Religion teaching and learning curriculum
- the liturgical and sacramental life of the school
- prayer and worship
- retreats and reflection experiences
- outreach, social action and justice programs
- the embedding of a Catholic perspective or worldview across the full curriculum. The policy will also provide guidelines for the professional and spiritual formation of staff in Catholic Schools

## **Definitions**

Faith Formation refers to all activities that assist students, parents, and staff in understanding the revelation of God. This involves putting names, categories or symbols on what has already been experienced, and opportunities to experience and understand God in their lives. Catholic Christian faith formation fosters a personal knowledge of God in Jesus Christ.

Spiritual Formation an ongoing process of being conformed to the image of Christ for the sake of others. (M. Robert Mulholland in 'Catching Fire: A Guide For Spiritual Transformation' Albert Haase, OFM).

School Community refers to the students, parents, teachers, support staff, school executive, priest and/or parish administrator, School Community Council and other individuals, groups and organisations involved with and/or concerned about the learning and well-being of students enrolled at the school.

Catholic Religious Literacy is described as students knowing '...the core teachings of our faith, our Scriptures, history and tradition...and how these are to be lived in the world.' It is aimed at enhancing students' religious knowledge and understanding, its application to life and demonstration. The goal of developing religious literacy should be situated within the broader goals of new (renewed) evangelisation and formation of Christian disciples (Catholic Education Commission NSW, 2010).

## **Catholic Ethos**

"Every curriculum area has a religious dimension, a capacity to assist students to examine the world of human culture and the world of religion, providing knowledge and skills, and fostering attitudes and values that are life giving and that assist young people to search for meaning and truth".

(Treasures New and Old Core Document pg 25)

At McAuley we seek truth through Gospel values and are faithful to the teachings of Christ in providing quality education. Religious Education assists students to become life long independent learners to achieve their potential. Students develop their spirituality, character, citizenship, global perspective, communication and critical thinking through balanced formal and informal curricula.

### **Teachers should:**

- Consistently and explicitly present students with the Catholic Churches' teaching and perspectives on human life, sexuality, personal development and relationships.
- Provide opportunities to develop skills such as reflection, critical thinking, problem solving, analysis and discernment.
- Foster in the students a moral sensitivity and a heightened capacity to understand their place in the world.
- Encourage students to reflect, judge and choose.
- Develop an awareness that the child is made in the image of God with basic needs to be cherished and nurtured.
- Recognize parents, school and parish have a responsibility to mutually support each other in the education of our children.
- Acknowledge the social and cultural contributions of individuals and respect their freedom.
- Encourage healthy competition, but not to the detriment of other participants.
- Provide students with information on sexual/contemporary issues within the catholic context.

## **Exit Outcomes**

A graduate of McAuley Catholic Central School should have the knowledge, skills, understandings, values and attitudes necessary to experience life-long relationships with God, others and the world around them. We work towards children leaving McAuley Catholic Central School with the following qualities:

### **Being able to integrate their faith with life experience by:**

- Combining religion with daily living
- Living by Gospel values
- Experiencing prayer
- Participating in school and Parish liturgies

### **Achieving their personal best by:**

- Becoming self reliant and self directed through personal goal setting and a commitment to life long learning
- Developing a positive attitude to self and others and a belief in their own worth
- Taking responsibility for own actions perceiving difficulties as challenges and steps to growth

### **The ability to make a valuable contribution to the wider community by:**

- Developing critical thinking skills and making informed decisions
- Being well informed about global issues and responding appropriately
- Having a knowledge of their own identity, heritage and cultural background
- Developing skills to access and use information and communication technology positively

### **Being confident, optimistic and proud of their individuality by:**

- Being honest, trustworthy, fair and just
- Respecting the different social, emotional and economic backgrounds of others
- Being able to contribute to the wider community through various levels of involvement

## **Situational Analysis**

McAuley Catholic Central School is a K–10, co-educational systemic school within the Canberra-Goulburn Archdiocese. McAuley is the only Catholic school in Tumut, a town located 390 km west of Sydney on the foothills of the Snowy Mountains. The school, though not then known as McAuley, was founded by the Sisters of Mercy in 1882, even though there had been lay run Catholic schools here in Tumut for a number of years.

McAuley was previously St Brigid's Primary School and Tumut Catholic High. Then in 1990 the two campuses amalgamated and McAuley Catholic Central School was born. The school continues a strong history of Catholic education in Tumut.

Tumut has a rich historical and cultural environment in which each student can actively participate. Students are predominantly from an Anglo-saxon background, however, due to the changes in industry there is an emerging multicultural community within the town and school.

## Rationale

The McAuley Catholic Central School (MCCS) Religious Education program is an Outcomes Based Curriculum model. The model is based upon *Treasures New and Old*, which supplies a fully integrated program, sequential in structure, which demands shared beliefs about teaching and learning and standard procedures for assessment and reporting. The staff have been involved in all aspects of the curriculum, sharing ideas, experiences, resource acquisition, assessment and reporting.

Religious Education is one of the Key Learning Areas and it is a core subject. The curriculum implemented, is based on *Treasures New and Old*, the Diocesan Guidelines and Syllabus. This document provides the background, core structure, underpinning theology and course units for the formal Religious Education Curriculum.

The students are encouraged within the Religious Education Program to achieve to the best of their ability. The model of Jesus and significant men and women, particularly Catherine McAuley, are placed before our students as examples of those who exemplify the Christian tradition by the way they lived their lives.

The Religious Education Program is based on Gospel values and these form the basis of every aspect of learning at MCCS. These values are significant for the development of the basic concepts and beliefs found in the MCCS Exit Outcomes.

The school's Religious Education program is based on the principles of the Catholic Ethos and Church teachings. The program assists all members of the school community to understand and respond to life and the contemporary world inspired by Christ's mission. Excellence in all aspects of learning is promoted and opportunities are provided to achieve this. Students are continually encouraged to integrate their faith with life experience by reflection.

The Religious Education Program at MCCS utilizes a Shared Christian Praxis approach to teaching and learning. This approach accommodates a rich variety of strategies. 'The focus of Shared Christian Praxis is the whole learner – one who thinks, feels, acts, relates – who is making his or her own meaning in the context of a specific faith community'. (*Treasures New and Old Core Document*, 2000, p.59)

Aside from the formal Religious Education curriculum, MCCS's faith development extends beyond the classroom. MCCS offers many rich and varied experiences for students and staff to nurture and develop as a faith community.

We develop the values of a Christian faith community through opportunities in prayer, Eucharist, liturgy, reflection and faith culture.

McAuley community members are encouraged to participate in a variety of prayer and liturgical experiences. These include, class masses, whole school masses, feast day celebrations, liturgies, Sacramental programs, Parish Masses and prayerful experiences in the classroom, as well as celebrating special intentions throughout the year.

The school provides the opportunity for students to reflect on their faith journey through retreats, social awareness activities and community building opportunities. These include a sequenced retreat program, Meals on Wheels, RDA, Blakeney Lodge visits (an elderly peoples' home), the school sponsored child, St Vincent de Paul Christmas appeal and the study and immersion in the Sister's of Mercy Charism – in particular the life of Catherine McAuley.

The Catholic Ethos of McAuley is central to its Mission and the Religious Education Program has a major contribution to make to the successful development of the whole person, both in the classroom and the culture of the school.

## **Policy**

McAuley's educational vision is expressed in the Archdiocesan Treasures New and Old Religious Education Core Document and Supplement and to develop Religious Education Core Documentation that provides the framework for a systematic, holistic, comprehensive school Religious Education program that will teach students about religion and that will teach students to be religious.

## **Policy Principles**

McAuley participates under the leadership of Archbishop Christopher and, in partnership with parents and parishes, in the Church's mission to provide quality education in the Catholic faith and Tradition.

McAuley "responds to its mission by offering a particular cultural experience that is grounded in '...a Christian view of the world, of culture and of history'. (The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium, 1997, n. 14)

This translates into a Christ-centred orientation that permeates all aspects of school life including relationships, structures, celebrations and routines, as well as the formal curriculum. Catholic Schools are called to form students as disciples of Christ. In the words of Pope Francis (June 7 2013), "School is one of the educational environments where one grows by learning how to live, how to become grown-up, mature men and women...the main element in school is learning to be magnanimous ... This means having a big heart, having a greatness of soul. It means having grand ideals, the desire to achieve great things in response to what God asks of us and, precisely because of this, doing everyday things, all our daily actions, commitments, and meetings with people well. [It means] doing the little everyday things with a big heart that is open to God and to others."

"School broadens not only your intellectual dimension, but also the human one."

All members of the school community are invited into a closer personal encounter with Christ through the proclamation, witness and service of those who work in Catholic Schools.

The school based Religious Education Core Documentation provides a systematic, holistic and comprehensive Religion teaching and learning program concerning the faith and Tradition of the Catholic Church which is appropriate to the developmental and individual needs and abilities of students. It is in accord with Scripture, the Catechism of the Catholic Church and its Compendium and Catholic Social Teaching, based on the Treasures New and Old Syllabus and endorse a critical and creative use of Shared Christian Praxis.

"By their witness and their behaviour teachers are of the first importance to impart a distinctive character to Catholic schools. It is, therefore, indispensable to ensure their continuing formation ...to animate them as witnesses of Christ in the classroom...their apostolate, especially regarding a Christian vision of the world and of education...the art of teaching in accordance with the principles of the Gospel" (The Catholic School n.78).

## **Procedures in Relation to the Implementation of the Religious Education**

### **The Religion Curriculum**

Treasures New and Old is the Religion curriculum taught within McAuley. It was promulgated by Archbishop Francis Carroll in 2000 for use in all Catholic Schools of the Archdiocese. Since its launch teachers have taught, modified and developed new units and curriculum content has been summarised in a syllabus.

**Treasures New and Old Curriculum Documents** individual schools draw on the following documents in the development of their educational vision and Religion Education policy.

### **Core Document**

- this places the Religion curriculum in its religious, educational and social context and outlines the curriculum model that is followed. Page 4 of 10 Religious Education Syllabus
- the syllabus is structured around stage outcomes and key concepts in four core strands or content areas. Stage Teacher Support Documentation
- this provides stage-specific information and support to teachers working with students in the different stages of schooling. Unit Outlines
- the unit outlines translate the required key concepts for each stage into practical 'modules' that support the classroom teacher in developing sustained, sequential, high-quality learning. Catholic Education Office Web Site
- all sections of the curriculum, Treasures New and Old, are accessible from the Catholic Education Office website [www.ceocg.catholic.edu.au](http://www.ceocg.catholic.edu.au)

**Shared Christian Praxis** **Shared Christian Praxis** is the framework for teaching and learning in Religion. It places the learner at the centre of all activity and engages students in a cycle of reflection and action.

**Pedagogy Treasures New and Old** identifies a range of approaches and strategies to ensure quality teaching and learning in Religion.

**Time Allocation** as the teaching of the Religion Curriculum (Treasures New and Old) is the priority learning area in the Catholic school curriculum Archdiocesan schools give first priority to the teaching of Treasures New and Old in the development of the school timetable, the allocation of class teachers and the allocation of resources in the school budget.

All K-6 primary school classes have the equivalent of one half hour per day (150 minutes per week) which is set aside for the teaching of the Religion Curriculum Treasures New and Old. This is exclusive of other religious celebrations and experiences such as Masses, prayer gatherings, retreats and reflection days, choir practice and performances and should be timetabled to make effective use of optimum learning time during the day.

The Secondary classes in Years 7-10, as a minimum, the equivalent of 100 hours per year is set aside for the teaching of the Religion curriculum Treasures New and Old

### **Teachers of Religion**

All teachers of Religion are Catholic and demonstrate an ongoing commitment to their own faith journey, the Catholic faith community, the Catholic Tradition and the teachings of the Catholic Church in the area of faith and morals along with regular participation in Sunday Eucharist and, more generally, in the life of the parish.

If a teacher who is from another faith background is in charge of a class, arrangements are made to enable a Catholic teacher to take the Religion teaching and learning program in that class. This only applies to the classroom Religion teaching and learning program.

All teachers are expected to prepare class prayer and participate in and support the religious life of the school.

### **Liturgical and Sacramental Life of the School**

Liturgy and Sacraments are part of the official formal, public prayer and worship of the Church. Schools can celebrate the Liturgy of the Church through the celebration of the Sacraments, Liturgy of the Word and Liturgy of the Hours (Daily Prayer of the Church).

School liturgical celebrations always contribute to the life of the parish as a worshipping community. Preparation of school liturgical celebrations are coordinated with the parish priest and take into account the needs of students, parents, teachers and parishioners whilst remaining faithful to the Church's directives for liturgical celebrations.

## **Sacraments**

Sacraments are special moments of meeting with Christ, are at the heart of the living of our Catholic faith. Parents, as the first educators of their children, have prime responsibility for the faith development of their child (Code of Canon Law, Canon 226).

McAuley's role is to assist the parish in supporting parents in this task. McAuley support the students and families engaged in sacramental preparation and first reception of the sacraments through recognition and prayer.

## **Sacramental Programs**

McAuley Catholic Central School has a major role in the preparation of students for the Sacraments of Reconciliation, Communion and Confirmation in the Tumut parish. This preparation is a combined effort between home, parish and school.

The students' parents, as the children's first and principal educators, provide an introduction to the sacraments by word and example. The parish supports the home by providing a more systematic catechesis in the preparation of students for Sacraments. The school complements these endeavours by focusing on particular sacramental celebrations by including a systematic study of the Sacrament in its Religious Education program.

The teachers of each Sacramental class write their programs at MCCS, with the Religious Education Coordinator as an assistant in the development of the overall Sacramental program. The school and parish representatives meet to coordinate the implementation of the program and the celebrations of the Sacraments.

The main events for each Sacramental Program are the Parent Information Evenings – held five to six weeks before the ceremony. These evenings consist of a Practicalities Handbook for each Sacrament that holds within the information for parents about the program and relevant information that allows families to plan and prepare for the events. The Retreat, where all the children participating in the Sacramental Program from the school and parish combine to practice the readings and jobs for the ceremony and participate in preparation activities as a whole group.

## **Penance**

Students in Year Two at McAuley are prepared for the sacrament of Penance. Non-Catholics within the classes are encouraged to participate in the program as fully as possible.

## **Eucharist**

Students in Year Three at McAuley are prepared for the sacrament of Eucharist. Non-Catholics within the classes are encouraged to participate in the program as fully as possible.

## **Confirmation**

Students in Year Six at McAuley are prepared for the sacrament of Confirmation. Non-Catholics within the classes are encouraged to participate in the program as fully as possible.

## **Parish Masses**

Students of McAuley Catholic Central School are responsible for leading Saturday Night Parish Masses every fourth weekend of each month. Students read the welcome, readings, commentary and prayers as well as take the Offertory to the altar.

As well as these times, McAuley students are invited to participate in key Parish masses for Easter and Christmas and the Gifting Mass at the conclusion of the year.

## **Class Liturgy and Reconciliation**

Year 3 to Year 10 students attend Reconciliation once per semester. Reconciliation is on Wednesdays at 10.00am in the church. Staff members are responsible for preparing the Reconciliation Liturgy with their classes, with support from the REC.

## **Whole School liturgy**

During the year, McAuley students are provided opportunities to participate in a number of whole school liturgies celebrating the opening of the new school year, Mercy Mass, Holy Week celebrations, selected important feast days and many occasions throughout the year when a whole school mass is important and appropriate.

## **Prayer**

Prayer is a universal expression that is evoked from individual's lived experiences in which we communicate with God. It puts us in touch with the very source of our being: the God who not only created us but who loves us, communicates with us and walks the journey of life with us as our partner of faith. Prayer is an essential element of the religious education of children. Through prayer children are able to express and deepen their relationship with God. In times of prayer we become more conscious of the ways that God's spirit is active in our lives.

It is the task of the teacher to assist students in the development of their prayer life. This policy supports McAuley Catholic Central School's commitment to developing a spiritual dimension within the school.

We at McAuley Catholic Central School believe that prayer is concerned with deepening children's connection with God.

## **Prayer**

- *promotes a loving relationship with God;*
- *celebrates and acknowledge our rich Catholic tradition of formal and informal prayer;*
- *guides children to praise, thank, reflect, petition and express sorrow; is based on life experience*

**Prayer:** *Growing in faithful relationship, listening, trusting and celebrating the living God.*  
(*Treasures New & Old, 2000, pg. 6*)

Prayers can be a variety of activities that respond to the relationship, praise and presence of God. There are times when the response to God's presence is one of song, movement, word, art, poetry or silence.

Students learn to pray by praying. The need for silence as a form of prayer is introduced from Kindergarten. In the primary classes students are taught the traditional prayers of the Catholic Church .

## **School Prayer**

### **McAuley School Prayer**

In everything that we think say and do today,  
May others see that you live in each one of us.  
Please help all of us at McAuley  
To show care and concern for others  
Mary our mother, look after us.

Each morning, during morning assembly, the Primary Campus will participate in praying the School Prayer. This is led by the SRC leaders for the week. The Secondary Campus will participate in prayer during morning assembly on Monday mornings and within the Pastoral Class each morning.

All major school functions, whole school ceremonies and awards assemblies will commence with a prayer. These prayers will be led by staff, selected SRC representatives or School/Campus leaders.

### **Class Prayer**

Class prayer is an essential part of the class structure in a reverent and faith developing class. This is where students, as part of their faith development and therefore their ever increasing relationship with God, develop important attitudes towards prayer and develop their understanding of the meaning of prayer in their lives. As a result, class prayer must be a focus for class teachers to lead, organise and facilitate the effective and meaningful place of prayer in the classroom.

### **Staff Prayer**

As members of a faith community, it is essential that the staff of McAuley Catholic Central School be active in prayer. The staff community of McAuley meets twice a week to participate in prayer. Staff prayer at McAuley occurs every Monday and Friday throughout the four school terms, commencing at 8:45am. Outside the Parish Church in the venue for these prayers and the organising staff member may use the Church facilities or the school grounds to lead staff prayer. A staff member is responsible for the organisation of these prayers. The school calendar has the staff prayer roster for the year.

### **Meeting Prayer**

Each significant meeting at McAuley will commence with a prayer. Executive Meetings will be led by staff according to the appropriate rosters. Campus and K-10 Meetings will be organised by the person rostered on prayer for the week.

### **Community Outreach**

#### **Blakeney Lodge**

Commencing in 2008, McAuley Primary students will visit the Aged Care Home, Blakeney Lodge. The visits will enable the students to participate in community outreach where they interact with members of the wider community, specifically the aged.

The program consists of classes visiting the Lodge and the students participating in various activities such as: singing, entertaining, gardening, art and craft and games. Each class will visit the Lodge twice a year on a rotational timetable.

#### **Meals on Wheels.**

Year 9 students are involved in the local Meals on Wheels Program. A roster is generated by the local coordinator. Year 9 parents provide transport for the students to collect and then deliver the meals to the elderly citizens who have requested this service. This community service was initiated in 2007 and continues to be implemented in 2008.

#### **World Vision Sponsor Child**

Throughout the year, the students raise money through various SRC activities to support the school's sponsor child. This program draws the students' awareness to the plight of many of the world's children who live in different conditions than themselves.

#### **St Vincent de Paul Winter Appeal**

#### **St Vincent de Paul Christmas Appeal**

Every Advent season, students are asked to supply gifts or food items to aid the Tumut St Vincent de Paul Christmas Appeal. These items are presented to the volunteers of St Vincent de Paul during the Gifting Mass held during Advent every year.

## **SRC Fundraising**

The McAuley SRC also lead fundraising drives to raise awareness and donations for two selected charities throughout the year. This allows the students opportunities to assist others in need and to raise awareness of Social Justice Issues in our local, national and international communities.

## **Further Opportunities**

Throughout their school lives at McAuley the students are provided opportunities for further engagement in Spiritual, Personal and Community growth. These activities are singular in nature and McAuley attempts to respond appropriately to these opportunities such as the World Youth Day, Prayers for Refugees, etc.

## **Programs**

The term's program should include the following features:

### **Outcomes**

The program should begin with the outcomes students will be working towards.

**Assessment Activities-** Plan the assessment tasks which will enable evaluation of student achievement in light of the outcomes. Consideration should be given to planning a range of valuable tasks that reflect the principles of 'assessment for learning'. Secondary teachers should use a marking rubric and provide this to the students prior to the task being completed. Primary teachers are encouraged to integrate the use of rubrics and checklist in their programs. Self and peer assessment should also be used where appropriate.

### **Focusing Activity**

An activity at the beginning of a unit of work to focus the students' attention on the topic of the unit.

### **Resources**

Each program should reflect the use of a range of resources to plan units of work.

**Teaching & Learning Experiences-**Each program should list the learning experiences planned for your students. These should be outlined in enough detail for a relief teacher to follow.

### **Register**

Each program should include a register of the date that each learning experience is completed.

### **Worksheets**

Where possible a copy of, or reference to, the worksheets for use in particular lessons should be included so relief teachers can continue implementing each program effectively.

### **Evaluation**

Each program should include an evaluation either ongoing or by the end of the unit of work. Teachers may consider the following questions when evaluating their Religious Education programs:

- How did planning, programming and teaching contribute to student achievement of outcomes?
- What were the literacy demands for this unit of work and did I address them appropriately?
- How did the learning experiences relate to students' existing knowledge and skills?
- Were the learning experiences sequenced effectively?
- Did I meet individual student's needs?
- Was adequate time allocated for the program?
- How did students respond to the resources selected?

When the teacher answers these questions it is expected that modification to the program will be enacted. This may include:

- More appropriate teaching strategies.
- More effective assessment/evaluation.
- More efficient and effective use of resources.

At school level this reflection will provide opportunities for the staff to:

- Identify areas of need.
- Address the professional growth of teachers.
- Recognition of school/system achievement and
- Provide a starting point for a cycle of future action.

An integral part of the McAuley Teaching and Learning Cycle, is the use of Assessment for Learning which continuously informs the teaching and learning programs and strategies.

### **Assessment record**

A record of the assessment tasks completed and the grades awarded in each KLA must be maintained. This must include outcomes, task, type and date completed.

### **Supervision of Teaching Programs**

Programs are due to the Religious Education Coordinator for review an evaluation in Week 6 of each term. Feedback is provided to teachers using the program checklist. Evaluation and lesson register must be continuously kept up to date.

### **Storing of Programs**

Teachers are asked to save a copy of all programs in a digital format on the Teachers' Drive on the school's server. These programs can be viewed in forthcoming years to aid future programs.

Approved by:	McAuley Executive
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