

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION POLICY

Policy	RE Policy
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Policy Officer	KEM EO

Rationale	The purpose of this policy is to outline the current context for Religious Education in Kildare Education Ministries (KEM) Schools, to identify the principles which guide it and the pedagogy which informs it.
Principles and Values	<p>Kildare Ministries (KM) and KEM draw their inspiration from the transformative vision of the of the Christian story and from our rich traditions. Responding to the changing needs of our world, we strive to build inclusive communities through the provision of education.</p> <p>The Kildare Ministries core values inform the approach to all education in KEM schools, including the area of Religious Education.</p> <p>Key Educative Principles:</p> <p>1. Context for Religious Education in KEM Schools</p> <p>Catholic schools are communities where faith, learning, culture, and life meet, and it is an ongoing challenge to make this meeting place meaningful for staff, students and their families. Catholic schools provide a living witness to the Gospel, however staff, students and families will only experience the tradition as meaningful if they are invited to develop points of connection with the Catholic faith and each other. KEM schools embrace the process of re-contextualisation, which is finding new ways to express the Gospel as authentic, alive and fresh, seeking new practices to make it come true in our world today.</p> <p>KEM schools operate within the multicultural and multi-faith environment of contemporary Australian society. Each school reflects this reality, and its richness is a cause for celebration. KEM and its schools strive to build inclusive communities imbued with a spirit of welcome.</p> <p>As such, Religious Education programs in KEM schools, whilst primarily focusing on the call to pass on the Judeo-Christian story, also recognise, appreciate, learn from and treat with dignity and respect the many faith stances of all members of the school community. The challenge is to invite students into an encounter with the Catholic Identity of the school without either disrespecting their religious diversity, or veering into indoctrination. KEM schools seek to be dialogical, respecting the individual viewpoints of students and families while remaining clearly committed to providing a systematic and sustained engagement with Catholic beliefs and teachings.</p> <p>2. Religious Education within the total educational offering of KEM Schools</p>

	<p>KEM schools continue to commit themselves to offering broadly focused Religious Education programs that are educative, respectful of personal freedom of thought and belief, and an integral component of student programs at all levels within the school.</p> <p>To be effective, Religious Education must be good education. Moreover, it must operate within an overall teaching and learning program that is based in sound pedagogy. This pedagogy recognises that links and connections exist between different key learning areas, and that learning skills acquired by students are transferable from one area to another. In keeping with the “KEM Principles for Teaching and Learning Policy”, Religious Education should be person-centred, and viewed as a process whereby students move along a continuum of cognitive, social and affective development.</p> <p>KEM schools seek to develop a culture of ‘post-critical belief’ (see Definitions), whereby students are taught critical thinking skills while searching for truth and meaning across the curriculum and every facet of school life. The development of curriculum is underpinned by the necessity of critical engagement and interpretation, while drawing from the Catholic faith to find truth, meaning and hope in every learning area. The Religious Education classroom provides obvious opportunities for engagement with the Catholic tradition. However, the entire school curriculum can become a means for discovery of what the Gospel means for students today. While drawing on state and national curriculum standards, the opportunity remains for significant engagement with the Catholic worldview.</p> <p>As a minimum, KEM schools intend for students to emerge with a worldview informed by Catholic beliefs and values in relation to God, life-giving relationships with people, Earth and all creation, justice and an ongoing search for what is good, right and true in their culture and world. This worldview objective can emerge when all curriculum areas and all staff of a KEM school are engaged with the teaching and learning of Catholic Social Teaching Principles. Faith is nurtured by both example and experience. All members of staff are expected to model forms of professional behaviour that are consistent with the values of the Gospels, and they have a responsibility to know in general terms what is being taught in Religious Education, and to support such teachings in other areas of curriculum and the life of the school.</p>
Audience	<p>The audience for this document is the KEM Board and Secretariat, Principals, Religious Education Staff and personnel employed, engaged or seeking employment in KEM schools, and the wider school communities.</p>
Definitions	<p>‘Religious Education is a learning area with a formal curriculum for the classroom learning and teaching of religion. It is a distinct learning area, <i>“a scholastic discipline with the same systematic demands and the same rigour as other disciplines”</i>. It is distinct from but complements faith formation.’ Source: NCEC (2018) ‘Framing Paper: Religious Education in Australian Catholic Schools’.</p> <p>Post-critical belief involves belief in a transcendent God along with awareness of critiques of belief. Post Critical Belief recognises that God is</p>

	<p>mystery, never completely containable by our human language. This belief is an attitude of wonder and quest. At its best it is regarded as the most mature form of faith (Post Critical Belief Source- ECSI).</p>
Procedures, Underpinning Principles and Practices	<p>Religious Education in KEM schools will assist young people to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acquire a comprehensive knowledge and understanding of the Catholic Faith Tradition – theology, scripture, ethics – at levels of complexity that are appropriate to the age of students over their six years of education, and which invite a response in faith, based on an understanding of the person of Jesus and the values he preached • Be attentive to and reflect on the meaning of their experiences within the perspective of religious values • Develop skills and attitudes which will enable them to respond positively to the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of their adult lives in ways that are consistent with their particular faith tradition • Develop an appreciation of the phenomenon of religion, including the concept of God and the relationship between a system of meaning and belief, its under-pinning values and the lived experience of its adherents • Foster appropriate attitudes such as respect for each other, respect for the views of others, respect for creation, awareness of the spiritual dimension of humankind, and awareness of moral responsibility • Have opportunities to experience personal prayer, and engage in community liturgy and ritual associated with the liturgical year and other celebratory events within the life of the school • Explore and respect different faith traditions and recognise the rich diversity within and across these different traditions • Support the development of an informed conscience and apply this process to ethical decision making • Have practical opportunities to cultivate faith in action • Cultivate a sense of the sacred in themselves, in their fellow human beings and in all creation and to see the interconnectedness of all life. <p>Religious Education programs and courses in KEM schools will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be an essential, rigorous and core element of the curriculum at each level of schooling and include a robust study of religion in the senior years of learning • Be taught by teachers with appropriate knowledge and skills and who are committed to religious education • Be accorded an appropriate time allocation within the organisation of the overall teaching and learning program and be scheduled at times that optimize opportunities for student learning • Utilise contemporary teaching and learning processes and resources to encourage dialogue and to reflect best practice in pedagogy • Provide public witness to religious belief through meaningful rituals, such as prayer and liturgy as part of significant school events and through social action within the local and broader community

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote a sense of personal spirituality through school sponsored retreats and reflection days and provide opportunities for growth through classroom activity Be guided by Diocesan Frameworks for Religious Education and other relevant resources, in line with National and State curriculum frameworks in the development of rigorous and engaging programs. <p>KEM Schools will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Appoint a Leader with responsibility for the development of Religious Education curriculum Develop R.E. Team members with appropriate knowledge, skills and commitment to lead the religious education program Provide opportunities for ongoing professional development, especially towards the attainment of Accreditation to Teach Religious Education, including support for formal study and short courses. Such support may be in the form of time and/or money. Further provision of opportunities will be provided for all staff members to attain <i>Accreditation to Teach in A Catholic School</i>. Include timetabled planning meetings, wherever possible, for year level teams of religious education teachers to work in a collaborative manner Allocate financial and material resources to allow for the development of an effective and engaging religious education program Engage with and contribute to the Kildare Ministries Formation Program providing opportunities for staff to continue to develop and explore their own faith.
Responsibilities and Communication Obligations	The KEM Executive Officer is responsible for communicating this policy to KEM Principals who in turn must convey it to all key stakeholders in their school communities.
Breaches of this Policy	Breaches of this policy may be addressed by further education or, where judged necessary, corrective or disciplinary action.
Appendices	Nil
Related policies and Procedures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> KEM Principles and Vision of Leadership KEM Principles of Teaching and Learning KEM Employment Policy KEM Promotion of Student Wellbeing Policy KEM Promotion of Staff Wellbeing Policy KEM Enrolment Policy
Resources	<p>National</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Living Justice Living Peace Charter Kildare Ministries' Values, Vision and Mission Statement

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kildare Education Ministries' Mission Statement • NCEC (2018) 'Framing Paper: Religious Education in Australian Catholic Schools' • NCEC (2022) 'A Framework for Student Faith Formation' <p>South Australia</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Religious Education – CESA <p>Victoria</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Horizons of Hope - MACS • Religious Education – DOBSEL • Source of Life – CEO Sandhurst
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