



ARCHDIOCESE OF BRISBANE

Catholic Education Council

Policy Statement

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION OF STUDENTS AT CATHOLIC AND ECUMENICAL SCHOOLS

Religious education in schools in the Archdiocese of Brisbane has its roots in the teaching ministry of Jesus Christ, the Word of God made flesh. In that sense, its origins are divine and it is not a purely human undertaking, though it goes to the heart of what it means to be human. Under the influence of the Holy Spirit, the teaching of Jesus is entrusted to the Church which he calls into being; and the schools are born from the womb of the Church. They are an essential part of the Church's mission to teach all nations (cf. Matt 28:16-20), but especially to pass on the treasures of the faith to the young and so to teach them what it means to be truly human.

The faith is not a message or a theory, not an ethical code or an ideology, but an encounter. Therefore, religious education in the schools of the Archdiocese seeks to lead the young into the encounter with Jesus crucified and risen, from which flows the life of discipleship. This involves supporting the learning of students on the path towards a personal integration of faith and life, in dialogue with the Catholic tradition, their own religious background and other world views.

INTRODUCTION

All students attending the schools of the Archdiocese of Brisbane are provided with opportunities for religious education suited to their age, background and the changing world in which they live. Through religious education centred on Jesus within a believing and learning community, the student develops as an individual in a way appropriate to age, maturity and faith development; and since faith is never lived in a vacuum, the religious education offered is attuned to the changed and changing realities of contemporary culture.

RATIONALE

Leaders of religious education in the Archdiocese of Brisbane aspire to *educate and form students who are challenged to live the Gospel of Jesus Christ so that they might participate critically and authentically in faith contexts and wider society.*¹

Enrolment in a school of the Archdiocese of Brisbane enables students to engage with a believing community and to be formed by the Catholic tradition through education. Religious education directed outward to mission aims to teach students about religion and how to be religious in a post-modern, ecumenical and multi-faith world.

*School communities that are inspired by the values of Catholic faith transpose their personalistic vision...into their organization and syllabi, not in order to oppose other cultures and religious faiths, but to engage in dialogue with them.*²

In so doing, Catholic educational institutions are called to *offer to all the Gospel of Jesus — respecting fully the freedom of all and the proper methods of each specific scholastic environment.*³

Thus, the school community *offers education imbued with a Christian spirit*.⁴ Religious education helps each student *to achieve the most complete formation possible*.⁵ *It expands students' spiritual awareness and religious identity, fostering their capacities and skills of discerning, interpreting, thinking critically, seeking truth and making meaning*.⁶

CONSEQUENCES

Every learner:

- is created in the image and likeness of God and, inspired by the Holy Spirit, responds to life with the endless creativity of the Gospel
- listens to the voice of Jesus in order to grow in the way of discipleship and seeks to find meaning in the Catholic tradition and draw hope from it
- learns to enter more deeply into the experience of prayer, coming to know Christianity as a mysticism rather than moralism, and to value the silence and solitude which this requires
- is a lifelong learner with a desire to search for truth and do what is right and is accountable for choices and responsible for actions
- can achieve success in life and learning where diversity is valued and shared wisdom contributes to decision-making
- brings to the learning experience their own unique life journey to contribute to a self-giving community, empowered by the Spirit to be at the service of others⁷
- acts for justice, peace and ecological sustainability in our world
- learns a special love for the poor and a commitment to serve them.

Religious educators in the Archdiocese of Brisbane:

- look to Jesus as the only Teacher and seek to develop a personal relationship with him
- align religious education with the Archdiocesan vision
- are qualified to teach religion according to accreditation requirements
- are well-formed in their vocation as a Christian and in the ministry of teaching
- enable parents, guardians and families to be the first educators of their children in the faith
- collaborate with the parish community to support student participation in the religious life of the parish
- develop, implement and review quality religious education in Catholic and ecumenical schools
- engage in formation and professional learning opportunities
- engage in empathetic dialogue with ecumenical, multi-faith and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives
- engage in contemporary pedagogy to enhance student achievement
- grow and mature, personally, professionally and spiritually.

Learning and teaching of religion in the Archdiocese of Brisbane is characterised by:

- principles and practices that inform learning and teaching in other learning areas
- the use of language that proposes rather than imposes in order to engage students more effectively in learning
- freedom to investigate, inquire and use religious imagination to dialogue with and beyond the Catholic tradition
- the authentic witness of a Christian life and teaching skill that invites students to discipleship and mission
- student engagement with the richness of the Catholic tradition
- engagement with both dimensions of religious education: teaching people about religion and teaching people to be religious in a particular way
- engagement in a pedagogy of questioning informed by contemporary educational research.

All religious education programs taught in schools of the Archdiocese of Brisbane require the endorsement of the Archbishop or his delegate. Each school of the Archdiocese of Brisbane is required to have a documented religious education program.

This program must meet the accreditation requirements of the approved Archdiocesan Religious Education curriculum and, when applicable, the accreditation requirements of the existing state government authority. Regular monitoring and review of the school religious education program and its delivery is aligned with approved school review processes.

REFERENCES

1. Archdiocese of Brisbane, 2013, *Religious Education Curriculum P-12*, Brisbane, p.10.
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3. Pope Francis, 2014, *Address of Pope Francis to Participants in the Plenary Session of the Congregation for Catholic Education (for Educational Institutions)*, Clementine Hall.
4. Congregation for Catholic Education, 2009, *Circular Letter to the Presidents of Bishops' Conferences on Religious Education in Schools*, Rome, s.5.
5. Congregation for Catholic Education, 1988, *The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School: Guidelines for Reflection and Renewal*, Rome, s.63.
6. National Catholic Education Commission, 2018, *Framing Paper – Religious Education in Australian Catholic Schools*, Sydney, p.7.
7. Brisbane Catholic Education, 2013, *Learning and Teaching Framework*, Brisbane.

Approved By	Archbishop Mark Coleridge
Issuing Group	Catholic Education Council
Implementation Date	February, 2019
Supersedes Policy Dated	August, 2005
BCE Contact Officer	Executive Officer, Office of the Executive Director



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For more information please contact the

Catholic Education Council

GPO Box 1201 Brisbane 4001

Email cec@bne.catholic.edu.au