



**LORETO SECONDARY SCHOOL,
CLONMEL**

Religious Education Policy

**Ratified by
The Board of Management
on 17th October 2022**

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The scope of the Religious Education Policy

As a Catholic School this religious education policy impacts on the whole school community. Support for the implementation of this religious education policy emanates from various groups:

Board of Management

- To approve the policy and ensure its effective implementation and monitor its review.

Principal and Deputy Principal

- To support the procedures of the policy and ensure its effective implementation.

School Staff

- Embraces and safeguards the Catholic ethos of the school and supports the cross-curricular nature of Religious Education.

Teachers of Religious Education

- To implement and review the policy.
- To ensure a high standard and effective delivery of Religious Education.

Chaplain

- Assists in the faith development of the students, the implementation of the policy and supports the staff and members of the school community.

Pastoral Care Personnel, Class Tutors, Year Heads, Guidance Counsellor

- Monitors the effects of the policy and provide support and guidance to students.

Students

- To participate in the Religious Education programme and related activities.

Parents Association

- By participating in the policy review and by supporting the implementation of the Religious Education programme and policy.

Loreto Secondary School, Clonmel



Loreto Secondary School is a Catholic School under the patronage of the Loreto Education Trust.

A Catholic school is a living expression of a long and varied tradition of education inspired by the life of Jesus Christ. Such a school promotes the dignity of the human person as a child of God called to work with other persons in creating an inclusive community in service of the common good; where knowledge is sought and respected while faith is nurtured and challenged.

Loreto Secondary School is situated in an urban-rural setting serving a very large and diverse population. One of the great strengths of the school is its social inclusion. The presence of students from diverse backgrounds enriches the life of the school.

Mission Statement

The Loreto Philosophy of Education is centred in God, rooted in Gospel values and derives its objectives and specific expression from the insights and vision of St Ignatius of Loyola and Mary Ward. It underpins our Mission Statement, which states:

Our school is a caring Christian Community in which students have the opportunity to achieve academic excellence, and to grow spiritually, emotionally, socially, creatively and physically in a healthy environment.

The Religious Education Department within the school seeks to foster and promote this philosophy throughout the school community.

Nature of Religious Education

As a Catholic school Religious Education is a core subject on the school curriculum and an integral part of the ethos of the school.

Three types of learning in Religious Education are evident in our school

1. '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 into their understanding of the Catholic Tradition.

2. 'Learning about religion'

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

3. 'Learning from religion'

Students evaluate both *what* has been learned and *how* it impacts on their lived commitments. Students are invited to learn from what they are discovering.

Religious Education that the school provides is open to, and inclusive of, all students, of all faiths and those of none. By studying RE a questioning spirit is fostered in young people as well as an understanding and respect for world views different to their own.

Vision of the School: Inspired by the Vision Of Mary Ward

The school seeks to:

- Live by Gospel values.
- Recognises the dignity of each individual.
- Has a special concern for the poor and under-privileged.
- Works for peace and justice in society.

Aims of Religious Education

- To contribute to the religious, spiritual and moral development of our students.
- To provide opportunities to deepen sacramental awareness and to participate in prayer and liturgy.
- To encourage our students to ask and seek answers to important questions.
- Enable students to appreciate the life and mission of Christ.
- Promote right relationships with self, others, God and all of creation.
- To develop care for the weak, co-operation between students, justice and fair play towards all, respect for truth, a passion for the environment and a love for learning.
- Heighten awareness, empathy and compassion for local needs, issues and global problems.

Rationale

This policy allows us the opportunity to reflect on and explore what it means to be a Catholic school and articulate our commitment to the importance of formal religious and moral education. 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 Mary Ward and the implications of what it means to be a Catholic school in the third millennium Ireland.

Goals of the Policy

- To ensure the status of RE in the school.
- To promote the religious, moral and spiritual development of all students.
- To appreciate the richness of religious traditions through the teaching of the Department of Education common curriculum based on the new Junior Cycle curriculum (but not examinable) for the junior cycle years and to expand on this in senior cycle.
- Explore the personal values of the student through questions generated through literature and film.
- Explore and celebrate Liturgical Moments throughout the year.
- Explore, celebrate and give contemporary expression to the values of Mary Ward.

Curriculum and Resources

Two class periods/two hours per week are devoted to R.E. at second year, third year, Senior Cycle and Transition Year level. In first year, one period is provided for the first eight weeks while the students are doing taster subjects and two hours provided thereafter.

Programmes

1. Junior Cycle

For all junior cycle classes there is a common curriculum based on the new Junior Cycle curriculum (but not examinable).

The aims of the Junior Cycle Religious Education programme are to:

- Provide students with a framework for encountering and engaging with the variety of religious traditions in Ireland and elsewhere.
- Promote an understanding and appreciation why people believe, as well as tolerance and respect for the values and beliefs of others.
- Explore the personal values of the student through questions generated through literature and film.
- Explore and celebrate Liturgical Moments throughout the year.

The Junior Cycle Course

This consists of three Strands:

- Expressing Beliefs,
- Exploring Questions
- Living Our Values.

Each of these three strands has between nine and twelve learning outcomes. These are statements that describe the knowledge, understanding, skills and values each student should be able to demonstrate. As each student engages with the sub-sections of each strand, they will be made aware of the Wellbeing Indicators relevant to the area of teaching and learning. The eight Key Skills that underly the Framework for Junior Cycle are also embedded within the teaching and learning of the strands.

Textbook/eBook:

Junior Cycle R.E. (Non-Examinable) textbooks will be notified each year via the book lists.

Transition Year Programme

The aims of Transition Year Religious Education are to:

- Promote an understanding of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.
- Explore the School Ethos with a focus on the values and life of Mary Ward.
- Heighten awareness of local needs and global concerns.

The course consists of:

- An exploration of school ethos and values with focus on the life of Mary Ward.
- Development Education Module.
- Explore the personal values of the student through questions generated through literature and film.
- Explore and celebrate Liturgical Moments throughout the year.

2. Senior Cycle Programme (Non-Exam)

The aim of Senior Cycle Religious Education

- Explore some of the questions people ask when searching for meaning in life.
- Reflect on issues dealing with morality, peace and justice.
- Explore the personal values of the student through questions generated through literature and film.
- Explore and celebrate Liturgical Moments throughout the year.

The course consists of studying the following:

- The search for meaning.
- World Religions.
- Morality.
- Justice and Peace.
- Society and Responsibility.
- Relationships.
- Explore the personal values of the student through questions generated through literature and film.
- Explore and celebrate Liturgical Moments throughout the year.

Textbook:

Senior Cycle R.E. (Non-Examinable) textbooks will be notified each year via the book lists.

Facilities and Resources

- Use of documentaries/ films online
- Sacred Space
- Liturgical Resource Store
- Access to Local Churches
- Access to laptops and data projectors
- Supervised Internet/YouTube
- Individual student tablets (used for research and projects)
- Set of Bibles
- Subsidised School Retreats
- Sacramental Chaplain
- Diocesan Advisor

Withdrawal from Religious Education classes

Loreto Secondary School respects and acknowledges the rights of parents/guardians who require their child to be excluded from Religious Education. The manner in which such an 'opt out' is facilitated is contingent on available resources within the school and complies with the school's policies on curriculum, supervision and child safeguarding.

Two options that are provided for students when a request for 'opt out' from Religious Education class is made include:

- A. Staying within the classroom following an educationally appropriate religious /humanistic /philosophical /moral development activity, i.e. students of other faiths and none are required to use the time to study something relating to their own personal philosophy, such as a relevant text like *Man's Search for Meaning* by Victor Frankl or *Tuesday's with Morrie* by Mitch Albom.
- B. Parents/guardians remove their daughter from the school premises for the duration of Religious Education class only on the specified timetabled days.

An appropriate procedure to facilitate a request for withdrawal from Religious Education class is as follows:

- I. A written notification from the parent(s)/guardian(s) to the principal.
- II. The principal meets with the parent(s)/guardian(s).
- III. The principal explains the Religious Education Policy and the options the school can provide for the withdrawal of their daughter from Religious Education class.
- IV. The decision reached between the principal and the parent(s)/guardian(s) is recorded and placed on the student file and the relevant teacher(s) informed.

Staffing

Religious Education is an integral part of our school, our school community and our Loreto ethos. This means ensuring its place on the school timetable with the allocation of the two class periods/two hours per week for all students. As with all subjects which students are taught, by teachers with specialist qualifications where possible.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION TEACHERS

All RE teachers will be responsible for sharing the following duties:

- Establish and overlook the Subject Plan for each year level.
- Liaise with the principal regarding the timetabling of Religious Education and the allocation of class periods.
- Liaise with the Sacramental Chaplain regarding liturgical celebrations during the year and organise same.
- Update and maintain the Sacred Space.
- Organise the school retreats.
- Organise meetings with the R.E. Team.
- Communicate with the Diocesan Advisor.
- Communicate any written correspondence to the R.E. Team.
- Set up the Advent Wreath, Crib and displays during the year.
- Implement and review the policy as and when required.

Staff Support and Development

The R.E. team are supported and may be facilitated in the following ways:

- Provision of a budget.
- Facilitated to arrange specialised personnel to assist in Liturgies or to attend the school as invited speakers.
- Attendance at in-service is facilitated on a rotation basis within the department.
- Support from
 - the Diocesan Advisor.
 - the School Management.

- the Trustees of the school
- the Loreto Education Office
- the Religious Education Support Service

Faith Formation and The Liturgical Year

In conjunction with our Mission Statement which is centred in God and rooted in gospel values, we celebrate the central Christian Feast days throughout the Liturgical year. These are marked in a special way in the Sacred Space. Students and staff who witness and experience concrete involvement in the liturgical and sacramental life of the school and parish share more readily the fullness of Gospel values.

Some of the activities that the school supports are:

- Mass to celebrate the new school year.
- St. Michael, the Archangel, protector of Loreto, is celebrated in September.
- In November, the whole school community is invited to remember the dead and the Eucharist is celebrated at the end of November.
- During Advent an opportunity to attend the Sacrament of Reconciliation is provided and an Advent Carol service takes place in the school if possible.
- Our foundress, Mary Ward, is celebrated in a special way in January during Mary Ward week.
- Celebration of Catholic Schools Week in January which includes a display in Tinsley Hall and daily reflections during the week.
- During Lent the school accommodates the distribution of Ashes.
- There is a Blessing of throats for the feast of St. Blaise.
- Graduation Mass for 6th years, their parents/guardians and the school community.
- 3rd year, 5th year and 6th year retreats are provided when possible. A T.Y. day of reflection/retreat is provided if possible.
- Prayer and reflection are an integral part of school life – facilitated by the Principal and the Cairde leaders through daily reflections on the intercom.
- Sudden Death/Bereavement – the R.E. Team, Chaplain and Pastoral Care Team respond accordingly led by the details in our Critical Incident Management Plan.

Religious Imagery

Christian Religious Imagery and Symbols are an integral part of our Catholic school and as such are placed in various locations around the school to reaffirm our Christian faith.

Outreach Programmes

Justice and Peace are an integral part of our R.E. Programme. Students are encouraged to empathise and show compassion for local and global justice issues. Students therefore participate in the following:

- Trócaire.
- Carol singing to raise funds for various charities.
- Student volunteers sent to Lourdes when the opportunity arises to work as aids on the Diocesan Trip as well as to Africa and India.
- Transition Year engagement with John Paul II Awards.
- Cairde team hold a raffle to raise funds for Saint Vincent De Paul and other charities during the year.
- Shoe Box Appeal.
- Guest speakers/presentations.

Sacramental Chaplain

The role of the Sacramental Chaplain is to:

- Encourage school-parish links.
- Be a support to the principal and staff.
- Provide sacramental and liturgical celebrations.

Retreats

Retreats are encouraged and promoted when possible for 3rd years, 5th years, TYs and 6th Years. The purpose of retreats is to:

- Provide a reflective space to students to deepen their understanding of the content of the religious education programme by engaging in creative activities, group discussion, meditation and prayer.
- Students who have opted out of R.E following the appropriate procedure are facilitated by the school to attend supervised activities other than the Retreat.
- The school authorities contribute towards the cost of retreats.

Parental and Parish Involvement

There is an opportunity for parents/guardians to be informed when possible about the content of the Religious Education programmes through:

- Enrolment meeting with parents/guardians
- Parent-Teacher Meetings
- First Year and Transition- Year information night

Parents/Guardians are involved in the Religious Education programmes by their presence at:

- Opening year school Mass.
- Leaving Certificate Graduation Mass.

The Sacramental Chaplain celebrates the school Liturgies, when possible.

Diocesan Support

The Diocesan Advisor visits the school annually to meet the Principal, Religious Education Co-Ordinator, Sacramental Chaplain and Religious Educators Team.

The Diocesan Advisor provides:

- Update on Diocesan and National Programmes of events.
- Advice on policy and subject plan.
- Creative ideas for religious lessons, meditation and liturgical events.
- Monthly on-line resources.
- Support for a school when there is a critical incident.
- On-going support through letter, telephone and email.

Subject Provision

Religious Education in this Catholic school is a core, non-examinable subject therefore all students at all levels are obligated to study and participate in it. All classes are mixed ability.

Assessment and Evaluation

The assessment and evaluation of all students of Religious Education occurs through student self-evaluation, differentiated questioning, student generated questions, worksheets, discussion, oral feedback, quizzes, teacher observation and reflection, projects and assessment tasks which will be reported on.

Profile of a Loreto Student

From *Continuing the Journey* – Loreto Education Centre, January 2016.

By the end of their time in a Loreto school it is hoped that our young people are:

- developing and deepening a relationship with God
- able to find God in reflection on their own experience
- happy, friendly and self-confident, with a sense of humour and an awareness of their God-given gifts and the need to fulfil their potential for good
- able to think for themselves, ready to further develop their diverse competencies, find their own voices, claim their own identities
- seen to have a generosity of spirit and a readiness to place their talents in service of others, especially the most needy, ready to ask 'What more can I do, what more can I give?'
- well prepared to take their place in contemporary society; motivated by selfless generosity and aware of how fully they can contribute to the common good
- ready to stand for truth and to be advocates for the voiceless
- proud of having belonged to a Loreto school community with respect for its values and for those who travelled the education journey with them

'Women in time will come to do much'

foundress Mary Ward IBVM

A Mary Ward Schools' COMPASS Document

ROOTED
RESPONSIVE
RELEVANT



shared by the 2017
conference in Pretoria,
South Africa

A Mary Ward school today affirms the centrality of the person of Jesus. His gospel and our particular charism offer to education a profound way of being, acting as a positive force for transformation of lives.

Building on the foundation of our God-given charism, we seek to invest in the holistic growth of our school community in a deeper understanding and living of the gospel.

ROOTED RESPONSIVE RELEVANT

Being an agent of change

A Mary Ward school today discerns what change is happening or needed, and encourages collaborative work to embrace change in order to take God's purpose forward through education.

(cf. KG pp 3 & 7)

Keeping our focus fixed

A Mary Ward school today continues to take its bearings from Jesus, his gospel, and our charism, and to be guided by our JUST SOUL traditional values of Justice, Verity (Truth), Sincerity, Freedom, and Felicity (Joy).

(cf. KG pp 1-2 & IBVM Call 1)

Guiding and guarding in the use of media

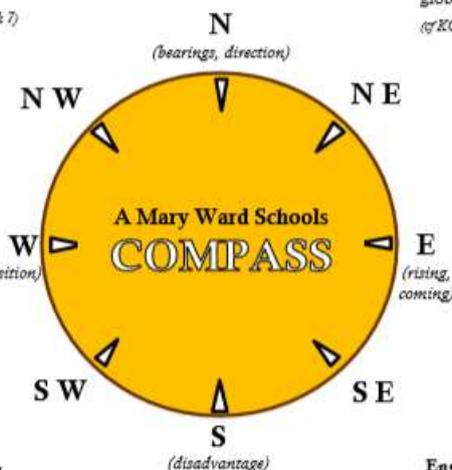
A Mary Ward school today develops responsive and effective ways to enable the young to engage safely and ethically with social media and emerging technology. This ensures the integrity of relationships while enhancing the opportunity for learning and creating global digital citizens.

(cf. KG pp 7-8 & CJ Call 8)

Owning and developing the charism

A Mary Ward school today joyfully accepts responsibility for evolving and unfolding in our time the God-given charism that Mary Ward channelled in her time. We continue to interpret this charism, adapting what has been passed on to us, in creative and innovative ways congruent to the times.

(cf. KG p 2, IBVM Call 1, CJ Call 8)



Cultivating values needed now

A Mary Ward school today promotes not only the traditional values in which it is rooted but also those values needed for education that is responsive and relevant to the present reality and to the future.

(cf. KG pp 1 & 7)

Embracing and affirming diversity

A Mary Ward school today embraces diversity as a mirroring of the wonder of Creation. Seeing the image of God in human diversity, we encourage the young to discover their interdependence so they each find their own dignity – "I am because you are" – and feel truly affirmed and included.

(cf. KG pp 6-7, IBVM Call 3)

Thinking and acting justly

A Mary Ward school today is aware of inequalities and oppression in the world of which it is part, and strives to be part of the solution, building peace by helping the young to think and act justly in response to injustice – whether in the school community, the broader community, or the environment.

(cf. KG pp 3, 6, 7, 9; IBVM 2; CJ 5, 6)

Engaging with the bigger picture

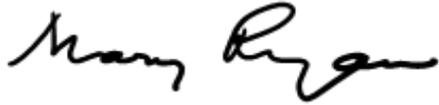
A Mary Ward school today, recognising the interconnectedness of all things, finds educational ways to engage with *Laudato si'* and *Agenda 2030: Transforming our World*. We promote the values, skills, and behaviours needed for living as global citizens finding fulfilment in harmony with all of creation.

(cf. KG p 3; IBVM 2, 4, 5; and CJ 4, 5, 6)

Policy Monitoring, Review and Timeframe

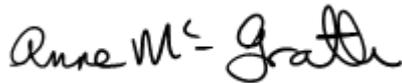
The R.E. Team meets at the end of each academic year to evaluate the success of the policy implementation. Communication between the R.E. Team and school management is ongoing so that our school reflects its commitment to Religious Education and its prominent place in the school.

The Religious Education Policy is reviewed every three years. This policy was agreed on the date noted below.



Signed: Ms. Mary Ryan, Chairperson of Board of Management

Date: 17/10/2022



Signed: Ms. Anne Mc Grath, Principal

Date: 17/10/2022