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Religious Education Policy

Rationale

Loreto College Foxrock is an all-girls voluntary secondary school run by a Board of Management under the trusteeship of the Loreto Sisters. As a Catholic school the person of Jesus Christ is at the heart of our community and Gospel values permeate the entire school experience.¹ The distinctive philosophy of the school is derived from the insights and vision of St. Ignatius of Loyola and Mary Ward. Mary Ward's core values of justice, freedom, sincerity, truth and joy are central to the spirituality of the school.² Education in this school is person-centred and holistic. In Foxrock we endeavour to provide a caring community and a supportive environment which encourages each student to develop her full spiritual, intellectual, moral, emotional and social potential.

*"In the Spirit of Mary Ward, Loreto College Foxrock is a caring, enabling, learning community where staff and students work together with mutual respect to fulfil their God-given potential with integrity, compassion, and a sense of humour in the generous pursuit of a just world."*³

Context

There are varying levels of faith experience and faith commitment in our school reflecting the wider cultural context of the church in Ireland today.

Aims of R.E. in the School

The general aim of Religious Education is to awaken people to faith and then to help them throughout their lives to deepen and strengthen that faith.⁴

The fundamental principles governing the Religious Education of students in this school may be stated as follows:

Religious Education:

- Contributes to the revelation and communication of God's love.
- Invites the student to respond to God with love and gratitude through a variety of experiences, including prayer and liturgy.
- Respects the student as a person.
- Engages with her personal and social development.
- Encourages students to ask key questions humankind has always asked.
- Deepens the appreciation and understanding of the Catholic tradition.

¹ Kolkatta Education Guidelines, (India: IBVM, 2003), p.1.

² IBID, p.1.

³ Loreto College Foxrock Mission Statement.

⁴ A Syllabus for the Religious Education of Catholic Pupils in Post-Primary Schools, (Dublin: Veritas, 1982), p. 44.



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- Fosters and deepens the student's faith.
- Contributes to the student's religious and moral development.
- Helps the student to tell her own story and the story of her faith community.
- Promotes open, mutually respectful and inclusive attitudes among students of different social, ethnic and religious backgrounds and highlights ecumenism as an essential feature of modern Christianity.
- Animates effective, active and cognitive religious experience.
- Embraces those with special education needs.
- Facilitates authenticity, commitment and responsibility on the part of the student and the teacher.
- Recognises the whole school, whole community nature of Religious Education.
- Acknowledges the wisdom gained through intergenerational reflection.
- Values the partnership between home, school, parish and the Loreto tradition.
- Promotes hospitality, generosity, compassion, justice, respect and peace.⁵

In summary, the religious education of students in this school is an interdisciplinary affair, grounded in education theory and practice and closely but critically connected to the contemporary culture.⁶

Subject Provision

Religious Education is a core subject which all students are obliged to study.

Number of class periods in each year:

- Three classes per week at Junior Cycle.
- Two classes per week in Transition year.
- Three classes per week at Senior Cycle (Fifth and Sixth year).

Teachers of Religious Education have found it helpful and effective to use the following methodologies:

- Activity Based Learning because active learning methods ensure that students are not simply passive recipients of information and give a greater significance to the learning because it arises out of student's own experience, ideas and behaviour.
- Narrative Engagement because narrative is intimately linked with identity. We are who we are because of the stories that we hold in common. At the heart of a narrative is a significant human experience that students should be invited to experience.
- Group Work because students benefit from interaction with others. It motivates students to take responsibility in the classroom and could lead to peer teaching occurring.
- Teacher Exposition/"Talk and Chalk" because students need to know key areas of the syllabus for examination purposes.

⁵ G. Byrne, *Children's Religious Education: Challenge and Gift*, G. Byrne and R. Topley (Editors) *Nurturing Children's Religious Imagination-The Challenge of Primary Religious Education Today*, (Dublin: Veritas, 2003) p. 59.

⁶ D. Lane, *Reimagining the Catholic World*, N. Prendergast and Luke Monaghan (Editors) *Reimagining the Catholic School*, (Dublin: Veritas, 2003) p.59.



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- Educational Tours to places of significance, such as a Synagogue, Mosque, local Parish Church, Carmelite Convent.

Assessment

- All students, having completed the three years' Junior Certificate course, sit the Junior Certificate Religious Education exam.
- All students sit formal in-house summer exams at the end of first and second year.

Facilities and Resources

- An Oratory
- Pastoral Counsellor's room.
- Video/DVD recorders
- Computer Room, including an interactive whiteboard
- Range of books and videos

Retreats

Retreats are spiritual experiences that recognise and acknowledge the human context of the students but go beyond this to the faith context.⁷

- One day retreats are organised for Junior and Senior cycles. These are reviewed every year.
- In addition, Leaving Certificate students can opt for a week of Guided Prayer by the Loreto Prayer Team.

The School Chaplain

The school Chaplain is a local diocesan priest who works in close co-operation with the Principal and the R.E. Department, providing opportunities for sacramental participation.

Working with the relevant staff he helps develop faith, worship and school ethos.

Inclusion of Students of Other Faiths

⁷ L. Monaghan and C. Renehan, *The Chaplain: A Faith Presence in the School Community* (Dublin: Columba, 1998) p. 13.



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It is because the Loreto traditions has such great respect for and places such great importance on , the personal journey of the students that the allocated time for Religious Education is not a study / 'free' class.

Should you wish to withdraw your daughter from Religious Education class, please note that the allocated time on the timetable for religious Education, in accordance with JMB / AMCSS guidelines, April 2010, should be used by students of other faiths to study something relating to their own religious traditions, e.g. sacred texts, or if a student is a Humanist or non-believer, relevant literature or philosophical texts should be read during this time.

The school appreciates your support of our ethos in this matter.

Pastoral Counsellor

The Pastoral Counsellor works closely with incoming first years in September. A liturgy is organised for each first-year group, where they remember the Gifts of the Holy Spirit that they received at Confirmation.

The Pastoral Counsellor meets students on an individual basis throughout the year. She sees any student who may be troubled, bereaved or having difficulties. These meetings are by appointment with the agreement of the class teacher.

Together with the R.E. team she helps in the preparations for the various Masses throughout the school year.

The Pastoral Counsellor is a member of the Crisis Response Team in the school.

Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation Group (JPIC)

The JPIC group in Foxrock work in partnership with the School Council, the Environment Committee and the Charities Committee.

The JPIC group have taken on the task of raising awareness of justice issues throughout the world, with a focus on Loreto projects.



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Conclusion

The R.E. department appreciates and values the ongoing support of Management and School Staff for the central role of R.E. in the school. This support helps to awaken our students' faith and strengthens it on their journey through life.

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management on 19 October 2009 and amended on 15 October 2012.