



## Religious Education Policy

### **1. Introduction:**

Loreto College Foxrock is a fee-charging girls secondary school in Dublin that has an open admissions policy and welcomes all students. This policy document aims to outline the school's Religious Education Policy and the philosophy that underpins it. This policy was drafted by the Religious Education Department in consultation with staff, students and parents.

### **2. Rationale:**

Loreto College Foxrock is 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.<sup>1</sup> 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.<sup>2</sup> 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."*<sup>3</sup> In our school 'Religious Education' implies a broader approach and is not necessarily defined within a particular religious tradition. It seeks to open students to education about different beliefs in society as well as an opportunity to learn from these different religions and beliefs in order to deepen their own belief and commitment.

### **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.

### **4. 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.<sup>4</sup>

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.

<sup>1</sup> Kolkatta Education Guidelines, (India: IBVM, 2003), p.1. <sup>2</sup> IBID, p.1. <sup>3</sup> Loreto College Foxrock Mission Statement.

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

- 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.<sup>5</sup>

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.<sup>6</sup>

### **5. Subject Provision:**

Religious Education is a core subject which all students are obliged to study. Number of class periods in each year:

- Two hours per week at Junior Cycle.
- One hour per week in Transition year.
- Two hours per week in Fifth and Sixth year.

### **6. Methodologies:**

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.
- All students have individual digital devices. This allows for ICT engagement in all classes, including devised based research.
- Educational Tours to places of significance, such as a Synagogue, Mosque, local Parish Church, Carmelite Convent.

### **7. Assessment:**

- All students sit formal in-house winter and summer exams at the end of first and second year.
- Junior Cycle- Class Based Assessment (CBA 1 in 2<sup>nd</sup> year and CBA 2 in 3<sup>rd</sup> year).
- Students who have completed the three years' sit the Junior Cycle Religious Education exam.

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.

### **8. Facilities and Resources:**

- An Oratory and storage area
- Video/DVD player/ data projectors
- Computer Room/student devices
- Range of book and DVDs
- Class set of Bibles
- Selection of symbols for different religions
- Sacred Spaces
- Shared Resources on School IT System
- Ember Team

### **9. Retreats:**

Retreats are spiritual experiences that recognise and acknowledge the human context of the students but go beyond this to the faith context<sup>7</sup>. Retreats are also days that focus on relationships and personal development and all students ought to be encouraged to partake in these days. One day retreats may be 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.

### **10. The Religious Education Team:**

The Chaplain and the members of the RE Dept work in close co-operation with the Principal providing opportunities for sacramental participation. They also help ensure the liturgical seasons and events are marked and celebrated during the school year (e.g. Advent, Christmas, Ash Wednesday, Lent, Easter and Pentecost). They also work with the relevant staff to help develop faith, worship and the school ethos.

### **11: Inclusion of Students of Other Faiths:**

In Loreto College Foxrock we embrace and affirm diversity and endeavour to provide a caring and respectful community which promotes the personal growth of each individual. The following are some of the ways that students of different faiths are supported in our community:

- Important festivals of different faith traditions are highlighted throughout the year, see Appendix A.
- When there is a prayer before class, students of different faiths are encouraged to show reverence during the prayer, promoting respect for the prayer experience. They do not have to participate in the prayer but could be encouraged to use the time to pray quietly in their own way. This is an opportunity to recognise and honour the spirituality of all the students. Students who hold no religious interpretation of life are invited to show respect for the prayer experience.
- Should you wish to withdraw your daughter from Religious Education, please note that the allocated time on the timetable for Religious Education, in accordance with JMB / AMCSS guidelines, should be used by students of other faiths to study something relating to their own religious traditions, e.g. sacred texts. If a student is humanist or an atheist there is relevant literature or philosophical texts that could be read during Religious Education class, for example Sophie's World by Jostein Gaarder or Man's Search for Meaning by Viktor Frankl (See Appendix B for more suggestions). Students remain in the RE classroom, alternative supervision is not provided. This approach highlights the importance the school places on the religious or spiritual formation of all of its students. All students have their own personal journey that is encouraged and respected.

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

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

**12: Student Groups:**

There are many student groups that work to promote the Loreto ethos in the school community. These groups may include the Ember Team. The Ember Team strives to promote faith development in the school and offer meaningful experiences for all students in Loreto Foxrock that demonstrates their commitment to embody faith in action. <https://education.dublindiocese.ie/2015/01/14/ember/>

**13: 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.

**14. Date Adopted:**

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

**15. Made Available:**

This policy has been made available to school personnel, published on the school website and provided to the Parents' Association. A copy of this policy will be made available to the Department of Education and Skills and the patron if requested.


**16. Review:**

This policy and its implementation will be reviewed by the Board of Management. Written notification that the review has been completed will be made available to school personnel, published on the school website and provided to the Parents' Association. A record of the review and its outcome will be made available, if requested, to the patron and the Department of Education and Skills.

This version of the policy was agreed on the date noted below.

Signed:   
(Chairperson of Board of Management)

Date: 12/6/23

Signed:   
(Principal)

Date: 12/6/23

# Appendix A

## Religious Festivals Calendar for the Major World Religions

The following are some of the religious festivals from other faith traditions that may be appropriate to highlight during your school year:

### ISLAM:

**Ramadan and Eid al-Fitr:** A thirty-day period of fasting with celebration at the end. The celebration of Eid al-Fitr involves family meals and the exchanging of gifts. Ramadan and Eid occur during the ninth month of the Islamic calendar.

**Eid al-Adha:** Islamic festival ending the annual Mecca pilgrimage. This occurs at the end of the twelfth month of the Islamic calendar.

### BUDDHISM

**Buddhist New Year:** The date depends on the country of origin to which the student belongs. Chinese New Year is generally in late January, while students from South-East Asia celebrate their New Year in April.

**Vesak:** The major Buddhist festival of the year, it celebrates the birth, enlightenment and death of the Buddha on the one day. It is celebrated on the first full moon day in May, except in a leap year when the festival is held in June.

### JUDAISM

**Passover:** Celebrating the Exodus; usually occurs close to the Christian dates of Easter, sometime in April.

**Rosh Hashanah:** Jewish New Year, generally around September.

**Yom Kippur:** The Day of Atonement, also in late September.

**Hanukkah:** Festival of Lights in December.

### HINDUISM AND SIKHISM

**Diwali:** This is the Festival of Lights which lasts for five days. For many Hindus and Sikhs, Diwali is also New Year's Eve.

See [www.interfaithcalendar.org](http://www.interfaithcalendar.org) or [www.dublincityinterfaithforum.org](http://www.dublincityinterfaithforum.org) for the exact dates of these festivals each year and ideas for celebration.

## Appendix B

### Suggested Reading for Students Opting Out of RE

Students within a particular faith tradition can be requested to study something pertaining to their own faith.

Students who are not aligned to any religious tradition could be provided with some of the following texts that deal with broad issues related to social and environmental justice, personal development, moral decision-making and philosophy.

It is the responsibility of the class teacher to know which texts may suit these students and read them beforehand to assess their suitability.

#### **Junior Cycle:**

- *Stella by Starlight*, Sharon Draper
- *This Side of Home*, Renée Watson
- *Chicken Soup for the Teenage Soul*, Jack Canfield, Mark Hansen & Kimberly Kirberger
- *Operation Redwood*, S. Terrell French
- *A Little Piece of Ground*, Elizabeth Laird
- *Wonder*, R.J. Palacio
- *The Lions of Little Rock*, Kristin Levine
- *Return to Sender*, Julia Alvarez
- *Sylvia & Aki*, Winifred Conkling

#### **Senior Cycle:**

- *Plato and the Platypus Walk into a Bar*, Thomas Cathcart
- *The Philosophy Files*, Stephen Law
- *The Choice: Embrace the Possible*, Edith Eger
- *I Was a Boy in Belsen*, Tomi Reichental
- *The Grapes of Wrath*, John Steinbeck
- *March: Book One (Trilogy)*, John Lewis and Andrew Aydin
- *The Little Prince*, Antoine De Saint-Exupéry
- *Sophie's World*, Jostein Gaarder
- *Man's Search for Meaning*, Victor Frankl

Guidelines on the Inclusion of Students of Different Beliefs in Catholic Secondary Schools

SECOND EDITION