



LORETO COLLEGE FOXROCK

Junior Cycle Subjects

Information Booklet 2026

INTRODUCTION TO JUNIOR CYCLE

The Framework for Junior Cycle (2015) outlines the key educational changes that the Department of Education and Skills (DES) has put in place for the first three years of post-primary education. This framework has informed teaching, learning, assessment and reporting in post-primary schools for a number of years.

The Junior Cycle began on a phased basis from September 2014 with a focus on literacy, numeracy and key skills and new approaches to assessment and reporting.

In addition to their academic subjects, students will engage in an area of learning entitled **Wellbeing** throughout the three years of Junior Cycle. This area of learning incorporates learning traditionally included in Civic, Social & Political Education (CSPE), Physical Education (PE), Social, Personal & Health Education (SPHE) and Guidance.

Students will also have the opportunity to engage with a range of **other learning experiences** in their Junior Cycle programme. These activities are set out in the school's programme for Junior Cycle. These can include social, cultural, pastoral, scientific, entrepreneurial and other activities.

Achieving your potential in the Junior Cycle requires a three year commitment from our students.

If you have a specific query please contact Ms H O'Malley, Guidance Counsellor at guidance@loretofoxrock.ie.

We wish to thank all the teachers who provided the information on subject content for this booklet.

CHOOSING YOUR SUBJECT OPTIONS

The purpose of this booklet is to provide you with information that should prove useful in making decisions regarding Junior Cycle subjects.

It is important to consider your personal strengths and learning styles when making your decisions. There is no such thing as 'an easy subject' at Junior Cycle as each subject requires a considerable amount of regular study.

In general when it comes to choosing your optional subjects you should:

- Choose subjects you are interested in and prepared to work at
- Choose subjects that suit your strengths and talents

- Select a range of subjects which will leave your career choices open for as long as possible
- Consult with the Guidance Counsellor
- Speak to older siblings, if applicable
- Speak to students studying the subject
- Look at the text books being used

For further information please consult the following websites:

- Look at past exam papers - these are available on-line at: www.examinations.ie
- Look at the specifications for the subject at www.curriculumonline.ie
- www.juniorcycle.ie

On the following pages you will find an outline of each of the subjects on offer at Loreto College Foxrock for the Junior Cycle.

SUBJECT LEVELS

English, Irish and Maths will be offered at two levels, higher and ordinary and all other subjects specified will be at common level. The externally assessed State Certified exam will reflect this. The Classroom Based Assessment (CBA) in Second Year and Third Year will be set at a common level.

CORE SUBJECTS

English, An Gaeilge, Maths, Geography, History, Religious Education, Science

English

In the English Department, we aim to introduce students to a broad range of texts ranging from fiction to film. We encourage discussion and engagement on the issues we encounter in these texts. Students are enabled to experiment with different styles of writing to find their unique voice. We strive to foster a love of reading through a variety of initiatives both inside and outside the classroom and hope that the students' experience in the classroom is both enriching academically and personally.

As in First year, the Second Year course follows a thematic structure. Students can expect to study a variety of themes such as friendship and belonging, conflict and triumph over adversity. Students will encounter these themes in a selection of texts including poetry, film, novel, drama and digital texts. In Second Year, students will complete their CBA 1 (Classroom Based Assessment). This takes the form of an oral presentation. The result of this task will be included in the Junior Cycle Profile of Achievement (JCPA).

An Gaeilge

The new Junior Cycle Irish course places an important emphasis on the active participation of the learner in acquiring their language skills. As a result, students will be partaking in a number of engaging activities including role-plays, pair work, group work, peer assessment and presentations through the medium of Irish. Our department aims to create a positive, enjoyable and enriching experience for the student.

In Second Year, students will be producing examples of their work for their portfolio to be assessed in preparation for an important classroom based assessment (CBA). A key focus of the Irish Department is to develop students' digital literacy skills while creating this body of work.

In Third Year, students will complete their CBA2, a 3 minute presentation in Irish on a topic of their choosing for example sport, Irish dancing or a holiday they went on.

Students will sit a written exam in June of Third Year. As part of this exam there will be an aural exam and a written paper focusing on literature and the target language.

Students are encouraged and expected to speak Irish as much as possible in and out of the classroom. We encourage students to attend an Irish summer school. Students will be acknowledged for their extracurricular Irish efforts in their Junior Cycle Profile of Achievement (JCPA). *Beatha teanga í a labhairt.*

Maths

Junior Cycle Mathematics focuses on improving students' mathematical experience in the classroom and on developing skills for life, work and further study through the five inter-connected strands: Statistics and Probability, Geometry and Trigonometry, Number, Algebra and Functions.

The objective of Junior Cycle Mathematics is that all students develop mathematical proficiency. Mathematical proficiency is more than just procedural fluency and is explicitly characterised in the syllabus as:

- conceptual understanding — comprehension of mathematical concepts, operations, and relations
- procedural fluency — skill in carrying out procedures flexibly, accurately, efficiently, and appropriately
- strategic competence — ability to formulate, represent and solve mathematical problems in both familiar and unfamiliar contexts
- adaptive reasoning — capacity for logical thought, reflection, explanation, justification and communication
- productive disposition — habitual inclination to see mathematics as sensible, useful, and worthwhile, coupled with a belief in diligence, perseverance and one's own efficacy.

How it is assessed:

In Second and Third Year, students will complete their two Classroom Based Assessments (CBA). A final assessment will take place at both levels in June of Third Year.

Geography

Geography is the study of the earth, its population, and the interaction between them. Geography allows students to explore and understand the world around them. Students learn important geographical skills such as map reading, understanding graphs, charts and images. Geography incorporates many concepts and ideas from a range of subjects which helps students make sense of the world around them. Students become well informed and responsible citizens and enables them to progress into further studies or the world of work.

The three are three interconnected strands in geography which include:-

1. Exploring the physical world
2. Exploring how we interact with the physical world
3. Exploring people, place and change

How it is assessed:

The assessment of geography for the purposes of the Junior Cycle Profile of Achievement (JCPA) will comprise two Classroom-Based Assessments (CBA). Students will report and present a topic in both CBA's. The first CBA will take place in Second Year which will be based on "Geography in the news". The second CBA will take place in Third Year entitled "My Geography", and will have a written assessment task that will be marked along with the final assessment by the State Examinations Commission (SEC). The assessment task is 10% of the final exam. The final exam will be a 2 hour examination paper at a common level set by the State Examinations Commission.

History

The study of History at Junior Cycle aims to enable students to develop the necessary conceptual understanding, disciplinary skills and subject knowledge to investigate the actions of people in the past and to come to a deeper understanding of the human condition. Students also come to see the world, and their place in it, from an historical perspective; and understand how the people and events of the past have shaped the contemporary world. The Junior Cycle History specification provides clear opportunities to progress the related learning that has taken place at primary level throughout the three years of Junior Cycle.

The specification has three interconnected strands, each with a set of related elements:

Strand One: The nature of history

Strand Two: The history of Ireland

Strand Three: The history of Europe and the wider world

Assessment: The assessment of History for the purposes of the Junior Cycle Profile of Achievement (JCPA) will comprise two Classroom-Based Assessments:

- (a) The past in my place and
- (b) A life in time

Students complete a formal written Assessment Task to be submitted to the State Examinations Commission (10%) for marking along with the final examination for history. There will be one examination paper at a common level. This paper will be set and marked by the State Examinations Commission. The examination will be of two hours duration and will take place at the end of Third Year.

Religious Education

Junior Cycle Religious Education focuses on developing knowledge, understanding, skills, attitudes and values to enable young people to come to an understanding of religion and its relevance to life, relationships, society and the wider world. The course is built around three interconnecting strands:

- **Expressing beliefs**
This strand develops students' ability to understand, respect and appreciate how people's beliefs have been expressed in the past and continue to be expressed today through lifestyle, culture, rites and rituals, community building, social action and ways of life.
- **Exploring questions**
This strand enables students to explore some of the questions of meaning, purpose and relationships that people wonder about, and to discover how people with different religious beliefs and other interpretations of life respond to these questions.
- **Living our values**
This strand focuses on enabling students to understand and reflect on the values that underlie actions and to recognise how moral decision-making works in their own lives and the lives of others, based on particular values and/or beliefs.

The three strands are underpinned by a set of cross-cutting elements: Enquiry, Exploration, Reflection and Action. These elements describe both a set of skills and an approach to learning that are important for Religious Education.

Assessment for the Junior Cycle Profile of Achievement:

The assessment of Religious Education for the purposes of the Junior Cycle Profile of Achievement (JCPA) will comprise two Classroom-Based Assessments and a final examination.

1. **Classroom Based Assessment (CBA) 1:** Individual or group report on a person of commitment – completed towards the end of Second Year.
2. **Classroom Based Assessment (CBA) 2:** Individual or group report on the human search for meaning – completed in the first term of Third year and will have a written Assessment Task, which will be corrected along with the final assessment, by the State Examinations Commission. The Assessment Task is 10% of the final exam.
3. **The final examination**

There will be one examination paper at a common level, set by the State Examinations Commission (SEC). The examination will be two hours in duration and will take place at the end of Third year.

Science

Science in Junior Cycle aims to develop students' evidence-based understanding of the natural world and their ability to gather and evaluate evidence; to consolidate and deepen their skills of working scientifically; to make them more self-aware as learners and become competent and confident in their ability to use and apply science in their everyday lives.

There is a focus given to the nature of science which aims to promote greater engagement and thinking about how science works; carrying out investigations, communicating in science, and the role and contribution of science and scientists to society.

The nature of science acts as the unifying strand across the other four contextual strands of study: Earth and Space, Chemical World, Physical World and Biological World.

Assessment

- New style of assessments offer students a chance to demonstrate their achievement as creators of scientific research reports.
- The assessment of Science for the purposes of the Junior Cycle Profile of Achievement (JCPA) will comprise two Classroom-Based Assessments (CBAs) and a final assessment.
- CBA 1: the Extended Experimental Investigation (EEI), will take place in Second Year.
- CBA 2: Science in Society Investigation (SSI), will take place in Third Year and will have a written Assessment Task, which will be corrected along with the final assessment, by the State Examinations Commission.
- The Assessment Task is 10% of the final exam.
- The final exam will be one examination paper at common level, set by the State Examinations Commission (SEC). The examination will be two hours in duration and will take place at the end of Third Year.

OPTION SUBJECTS

Business Studies

Business Studies develops skills, knowledge, attitudes and behaviours that enable students to make informed and responsible decisions with all of the resources available to them, ensuring their and society's well-being, while becoming more self-aware as learners. It supports the development of analytical and critical thinking skills, encouraging students to be problem solvers.

The specification for Junior Cycle Business Studies focuses on improving students' understanding of the business environment and on developing skills for life, work and further study through the three inter-connected strands: **Personal finance, Enterprise and Our economy**.

Personal finance focuses on students developing a set of skills, knowledge and values that allow them to make informed decisions to effectively and responsibly manage their financial resources.

Enterprise encourages students to identify opportunities and turn them into practical and targeted activities within business and wider society through the development and application of their understanding, skills and values. It develops students' basic understanding of the financial, marketing and operational functions of an organisation.

Our economy enables students to understand the dynamic relationship between the local, national and international economic situation. It develops students' ability to identify and understand basic economic concepts as they relate to personal finance, enterprise and the Irish economy.

Assessment:

The assessment of Business Studies for the purposes of the Junior Cycle Profile of Achievement (JCPA) will comprise two Classroom-Based Assessments (CBA), Business in Action and Presentation, and a final assessment. The first Classroom-Based Assessment will take place in Second Year. The second CBA will take place in Third Year and will have a written Assessment Task that will be marked, along with the final assessment, by the State Examinations Commission. The Assessment Task is 10% of the final exam. The final exam will be one examination paper at common level, set by the State Examinations Commission (SEC). The examination will be no longer than two hours in duration and will take place at the end of Third Year.

Link to Senior Cycle

Significantly, there is a strong development of the understanding and skills required for business-related subjects in senior cycle. Mini-company formation, enterprise and social innovation feature in the Transition Year (TY) programme of our school. Students also undertake work experience.

There are strong links to the course for Leaving Certificate Business, Accounting and Economics, with students building on their financial, business and economic understanding and skills from Junior Cycle.

Classics

What is Classics?

Classics is the study of the Civilizations of Ancient Greece and Rome. In this course, students will study the mythology, daily life, history and literature of Greece and Rome.

Strand 1: Myth & Daily Life

- **Mythology:** explore the world of Ancient Greek and Roman heroes, gods, goddesses and monsters. Learn about Zeus, Athena, Hercules, Theseus and the Minotaur, Medusa, the Cyclops and the Titans.
- **Daily Life:** explore the history and daily life of the Ancient Romans and Greeks, their food, clothes, religion, temples, bathhouses, amphitheatres, gladiators, chariot-racing and other aspects of their lives.

Strand 2: Troy and Rome

- **The World of Achilles:** read the story of Troy, Achilles and Hector, the Trojan horse, about Helen and Paris. Read and analyse parts of the ancient text and explore the oldest story in western literature and mythology.
- **Rome City of an Empire:** study the Colosseum, Palace of Nero and the baths of Caracalla. Explore the mad, the bad and good emperors of Rome and the buildings they built.

Why choose Classics?

If you love stories and ancient myths, Percy Jackson or Harry Potter, or if you want to try something new Classics is a great option. It is never boring and there is always something interesting to learn. You will also gain a lot of skills – learn how to analyse ancient texts and artefacts, to analyse, to debate and discuss history, mythology and philosophy. Classics can also have huge benefits for your literacy skills (reading and writing).

Take the word of current 6th Year Classics students:

- “It is the most interesting subject the school offers and it is a lot of fun to learn.”
- “The stories within Classics are so interesting and it's a great place to gain new insights into everyday life among other things.”
- “Classics is easily my favourite subject, there's so much freedom with it and it definitely sets you up well for college.”

French

The new Junior Cycle French syllabus is a fun and exciting way to study a foreign language.

In the Junior Cycle you will have the opportunity to:

- **Learn** French in an *active* way through oral, aural, written and reading tasks enabling you to interact with French people at home and abroad.
- **Reflect** on your language learning by entering oral recordings and written work into your language – learning portfolio.

- **Explore** the French-speaking world, its peoples and culture.
- **Participate** in the cultural activities during French week.
- **Correspond** with pen-pals.

Assessment:

There will be oral, aural and written assessments throughout the three years.

Junior Cycle assessment includes the following:

1. Classroom Based Assessment 1 – Oral Communication Task (Second Year)
2. Classroom Based Assessment 2 – Language Portfolio (Third Year)
3. Assessment 3 – Assessment Task (10%) (Third Year)
4. Final Examination (90) – (Aural included – 35%) (end of Third Year)

Home Economics

Studying Junior Cycle Home Economics is an exciting way to develop the knowledge, understanding, skills and values necessary to achieve healthy and sustainable living for every person. It is studied through three strands: **Food, Health and Culinary Skills**; **Responsible Family Living**; and, **Textiles and Craft**.

Food, Health and Culinary Skills

This strand focuses on developing your food, health and culinary skills. You will apply your understanding of nutrition, diet and health principles in order to adopt a healthy lifestyle. This strand involves menu planning; shopping; cooking; health and safety food skills; portion control; reading food labels; dietary analysis; costing; sensory analysis; and food waste (sustainability).

Responsible Family Living

You will develop an understanding of the different forms and role of families as the core social unit. You will establish an understanding of the role of the family in the development of the child. You will develop life skills to manage resources responsibly and sustainably in the home, family and community. You will be facilitated to become discerning, competent consumers and be able to apply effective decision-making skills in everyday contexts in the home and community.

Textiles and Craft

This strand focuses on developing your textile skills, knowledge and creativity with a focus on sustainability. Practical textile and craft skills are integral to this strand and include hand and machine sewing skills, and fabric texturing and embellishment techniques.

Assessment

1. Classroom Based Assessment 1 – **Creative Textiles** (Second Year). Students will either:
 - Make a creative textile item for an individual or a home
 - or**
 - Recycle or upcycle a creative textile item for an individual or a home
2. Classroom Based Assessment 2 – **Food Literacy Skills** (Third Year). Students will complete a written project showing research of a design brief given by State Exams Commission
3. Practical Food Skills Exam – **50%** (Cook dish based on research for CBA 2)
4. Final written examination – **50%** (Common level exam set by the State Exams Commission)

Music

Practical Examination (performance examination in March/April) – **30%**

Listening and Composing Written Paper (June examination) – **70%**

CBA 1 – Compositional Portfolio

CBA 2 – Programme Note

Practical 30%

Students are invited to prepare a programme of music on their chosen instrument/s to perform in front of an external examiner. Students can begin an instrument in First Year of secondary school and can be successful in obtaining a high mark in their performance in Third Year. Singing is a very popular option for students for the practical exam. Prior musical experience is not required to study music at secondary school level. Students are asked to perform **three pieces on one, two or three instruments** as part of the junior cycle practical exam. Students can perform as a soloist or as part of a group. This allows flexibility for students when deciding on what instrument/s to perform.

Written Exam - Listening and Composing – 70%

Students will sit an hour and a half exam at the end of Third Year. During this exam, students will be required to engage with, demonstrate comprehension of, and provide written responses to material played (through recordings) and compositional exercises. Students will develop their listening and compositional skills throughout the three years of the Junior Cycle Music Curriculum, in order to prepare for the final written exam.

Classroom Based Assessment 1

Students will be asked to prepare a composition portfolio by compiling a collection of their musical ideas and creative expressions in a variety of styles over time. Two pieces of the portfolio will be selected by the student for assessment purposes. Students may include an arrangement of an existing piece of music, adding music to text, creating an advertisement jingle, creating music for a school event etc. The compositional CBA 1 will be assessed in Second Year.

Classroom Based Assessment 2

Students are required to prepare a programme note to inform the examiner on the content of their upcoming performance (practical exam). The programme note can include a brief introduction to the composer, a description of the historical content of the pieces, an interesting musical point for the audience to listen out for and the student's role in the group if relevant. The Programme Note CBA 2 will be assessed in Third Year.

Why Choose Music?

- Students who are willing to practice their instrument continuously over the three year Junior Cycle can achieve a high mark in their performance exam.
- The practical exam takes place before or after the Easter holidays. This takes pressure off the student throughout the State Exams in June.
- The expected level for the Junior Cycle music practical is Grade 2/3 approximately.

It is not compulsory to have studied music prior to secondary school in order to study music at Junior Cycle level.

FAQ's:

Q1. Does my daughter have to play an instrument before selecting music for Junior Cycle Music?

Ans: First Year students will be given the opportunity to learn group ukulele as a classroom instrument. This is especially helpful if a student does not already play an instrument. If a student wishes to continue with her own chosen instrument (piano, violin, cello, flute, concertina etc) or use her voice as the main performance instrument, that is most welcome within the music class.

Q2. Is there an opportunity for my daughter to learn an instrument individually?

Ans: Loreto Foxrock provides individual vocal and instrumental lessons for flute, clarinet & recorder. Students can sign up each year to attend vocal and instrumental lessons. Students are excused from class once a week for a half an hour to attend their individual lesson. There is an additional fee involved for individual lessons. Students can prepare for grade exams, musical theatre exams & performance opportunities throughout the year.

Q3. Is there an opportunity for my daughter to learn an instrument in a group setting?

Ans: Students who choose music as a Junior Cycle subject will have the opportunity to learn the ukulele as a classroom instrument. Any student who wishes to learn the piano and guitar are given an opportunity to attend group lessons (depending on the availability of the teacher) during lunch time. There is an additional fee involved for piano and guitar lessons. Piano and guitar group lessons are subject to the availability of the teacher and the interest within the year group.

Q4. Can my daughter continue to attend her private lessons on her voice/instrument outside of school?

Ans: Loreto Foxrock supports students in continuing their tuition on the instrument of their choice outside of school. Many students attend private lessons as they wish to complete grade exams with an instrumental/vocal teacher. Loreto Foxrock aims to give musicians performance opportunities throughout the school year.

Q5. My daughter will not be choosing Music as a Junior Cycle subject. Can she still be involved with extra-curricular music?

Ans: Loreto Foxrock has a variety of extra-curricular activities that are available to all students within the school. Extra-curricular musical activities include Choir, Flute Ensemble, Ukulele Group, String Ensemble & Trad Ensemble, to name a few.

Q6. My daughter will not be studying Junior Cycle Music but would like to study Music at Senior cycle. Is this possible?

Ans: Yes. It is not a requirement for students to study Junior Cycle Music if they wish to study Music in Senior Cycle. Music at Senior Cycle is open to all students if they wish to take it up. Students should have an instrument/voice they are comfortable using for the practical music exam (performance exam) for Senior Cycle Music.

Spanish

Students study Spanish for a variety of reasons

- It is one of the most widely spoken languages in the world now so students are likely to use it throughout their lifetime
- Many of our students are already travelling to Spain every summer
- They appreciate the opportunities learning it will give them to communicate confidently
- Find it easy to pronounce
- Relish the challenge that learning a new language brings
- Achieve excellent results in the State exams

Students studying Spanish start as beginners in First Year and go right through to Sixth Year. The approach is always to study what's relevant in the language so that if they go to Spain they should be able to communicate effectively, understand what they are reading and hearing and develop these skills as the years go by.

Topics include:

- greetings, family, hobbies, daily routine, looking for directions, reading menus etc (all relevant to the Junior Cycle examination)
- Oral practice through projects to be presented to the class on life in Spain and/or South America (almost all of which is Spanish speaking), foods and customs and schooling typical to these countries and a comparison with Irish customs and schools, and reading and learning about general topics (Transition Year)

Finally, there is a wide range of extra-curricular activities that take place in Loreto College Foxrock, from our lively Spanish week, conversation classes and our TY language exchange programmes.

Visual Art

What is involved?

Junior Cycle Visual Art involves three different areas: **Art, Craft and Design**. You will be taken on a journey to explore each of these three areas. You will learn the skills necessary to create artworks and designs of your own. You will learn drawing, painting, printmaking, clay modelling and creative embroidery. You will also learn how to use a range of materials and techniques. You will learn how to look at artworks created by other artists, architects, photographers and fashion designers and how to talk about them. You will learn how to produce original ideas and how to experiment with different ideas through research and drawing.

How it is examined:

There is no formal exam in Junior Cycle Visual Art. You will be assessed on practical project work. Your teacher will assess your project work in Second Year and again in Third Year. You will then do a project between December and March of Third Year, this will be assessed by an examiner from the State Examinations Commission at the end of Third Year.

Why choose Art?

Art is a fun, colourful and exciting subject. You can find your own special talent and develop it in the relaxed atmosphere of our beautiful art rooms. By choosing this subject you will develop self-confidence, inquisitiveness, problem-solving, imagination and creativity. These are skills which can be used in other subjects and other areas of your life. Art is also a Leaving Cert subject in this school.

WELLBEING PROGRAMME

Wellbeing in Junior Cycle is about young people feeling confident, happy, healthy and connected. Wellbeing will provide learning opportunities to enhance physical, mental, emotional and social wellbeing and resilience of students, and to enable students to build life-skills and to develop a strong sense of connectedness to the school and to their community.

Civic, Social and Political Education (CSPE)

Civic, Social and Political Education aims to prepare students for active participatory citizenship. This is achieved through comprehensive exploration of the civic, social and political dimensions of their lives at a time when students are developing from dependent children into independent young adults. It should produce knowledgeable pupils who can explore, analyse and evaluate, who are skilled and practised in moral and critical appraisal, and capable of making decisions and judgements through a reflective citizenship, based on human rights and social responsibilities.

It is built around three strands:

- rights and responsibilities,
- global citizenship and
- exploring democracy.

There is a strong focus on student action aimed at giving students an experience of active citizenship.

Students complete one CSPE CBA that assesses their understanding of citizenship and their ability to take civic action. It usually involves an action project focused on a social issue and encourages critical thinking, teamwork, and reflection on civic responsibility.

CSPE is an important part of a wellbeing programme within Junior Cycle as it enables students to feel connected to and take responsibility for the wellbeing of others. It also develops students' confidence, agency and engagement, which are important characteristics of student wellbeing.

Physical Education (PE)

The Physical Education programme at Loreto College Foxrock follows the JCPE Short-Course Curriculum, broad based approach to a wide range of physical activities, sport and movement skills. There are two weekly hours on the First Year timetable while, Second and Third year students complete one hour weekly. A CBA is required to be completed during Second Year and/or Third Year. Students show their knowledge of the Key Skills of the Junior Cycle (Being Literate, Managing Myself, Staying Well, Managing Information and Thinking, Being Numerate, Being Creative, Working with Others and Communicating) in one chosen strand of the curriculum.

- CBA – 2nd Year, students will design and implement a programme based on personal goals to improve their physical activity engagement. At the end of the six -week period students will report on their programme based on the plan implemented and evaluation of its success.
- CBA - 3rd year, decide how best to demonstrate competent skill level through a chosen physical activity area. At the end of the six -week period students will demonstrate their skill level by way of a class-based performance.

These key skills are emphasised and embedded in the roll-out of Physical Education in Loreto College Foxrock Junior Cycle. The Junior Cycle Physical Education specification aims to develop students as competent and confident physical activity participants in a range of physical activities. The strands which are taught throughout their three years of Junior Cycle are as follows:

- Health related activity
- Dance
- Gymnastics
- Adventure
- Athletics
- Games

Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE)

Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) is a core pillar of our Junior Cycle Wellbeing Programme. It provides a unique opportunity where students can develop the skills and competencies to learn about themselves, to care for themselves and others and to make informed decisions about their overall health and wellbeing. SPHE is timetabled for one period a week for all students from First Year right through to Sixth Year.

SPHE classes focus on group work, discussions, role play etc. Through engaging discussions, reflective activities and real-life scenarios, students develop critical thinking, communication and decision-making skills. SPHE also provides the context within which students can learn about self-management, decision-making, communication skills, substance abuse, belonging and integrating and emotional issues around relationships, sex and sexuality including where to get reliable information from trusted sources.

The Junior Cycle course is structured around four interconnected strands of social, personal and health education ensuring students are well-equipped to navigate the challenges of modern life:

- Understanding myself and others
- Making healthy choices
- Relationships and Sexuality
- Emotional wellbeing

Students complete one CBA in 2nd year (SPHE in Action) which involves working in small groups while researching, reporting and reflecting on an action they have taken to raise awareness about or promote an aspect of health/ wellbeing studied in the SPHE short course.

Wellbeing Modules

CSPE, PE and SPHE provide the main curriculum pillars for building a school's Wellbeing programme and accounts for at least 335 of the 400 timetabled hours over the three years of Junior Cycle. Schools can use the remaining time to provide additional learning that has been identified as important for their students' learning in Wellbeing. We currently run rotating Wellbeing modules in first and second year.

Our units of learning address aspects of wellbeing identified through consultation with students, teachers and parents/guardians. They respond to specific needs/interests of our students and support students in learning about wellbeing or developing the skills needed to support their wellbeing. We also provide units of learning that relate to the three interlinked aspects of guidance education – personal and social development, educational guidance and career guidance. Students maintain a portfolio of their learning. Modules are reviewed annually by teachers and students to keep them relevant, responsive and focused on improving the Wellbeing of students. Here are some of the modules that we are running in first and second year at the moment:

Guidance

Moving into post-primary education can be an exciting and challenging time. This module aims to support students during this transition to help build new relationships and friendships and to enable success in learning. The National Centre for Guidance in Education (NCGE) responded to this need by co-creating this unit with teachers and consulting with students in its development.

This unit aims to guide students in their transition from primary to post primary school by facilitating students in developing self-management, personal and social skills to enable a positive transition and to begin to think about career paths and future options.

Choir/Music for Wellbeing

Evidence of the health and wellbeing benefits of singing or performing music is very strong, particularly when performing is done as part of a group. This awareness led to this unit of learning being developed. There was also a desire to develop a unit that would help create a positive class climate to celebrate the success and involvement of 1st year students and where the skills and abilities of all are recognised and affirmed.

During this module students will develop skills of self-awareness that allow students appreciate how music and singing can support their wellbeing and develop skills of musical expression, so that they can create and perform music with others and experience joy, creativity and a sense of wellbeing.

Computer Studies

Young people are actively manipulating digital media to participate in social and cultural life. Making and sharing media has become an increasingly important feature of how young people communicate and engage with each other and with the wider world. For them, posting, linking, sharing and searching are among the ways they participate in their communities and socialise. In this module students learn to use digital technology, communication tools and the internet to engage in self-directed enquiry. They learn how to create, collaborate and communicate effectively and to understand how and when digital technologies can best be used to support these processes. This module aims to extend and refine students' ability to use digital technology, communication tools, and the internet creatively, critically and safely, in support of their development, learning and capacity to participate effectively in social and community life.

Learning to Learn

The Learning to Learn programme is aimed at embedding a culture of learning and study at Junior Cycle. One of the key objectives of the Junior Cycle is to place the student at the centre of the teaching and learning. Students today are facing the challenge of ongoing changes in the nature of knowledge and the need for the requisite skills to process this increasing amount of information. This programme will assist students in knowing themselves better as learners, being more organised and confident along with having a proven study system and learning approach which will reduce their stress levels and add to their sense of wellbeing.

Resilience

This 'Road to Resilience' programme is developed by Pieta House. The programme is designed to equip young people with emotional resilience tools, and to increase protective factors such as coping, problem solving, decision-making and cognitive skills.

The programme is delivered over four modules: 'Dealing with Change', 'Connections', 'Mental Health' and 'Managing Stress and Self-Care'. The programme is delivered through a blended approach. In practice, this will involve the facilitator providing in-person delivery, recorded video messages from Pieta Facilitators and a workbook for the participants to complete activities.

Empathy

Our Empathy module is based on 'The Activating Social Empathy School Programme' developed by UNESCO and researchers in University College Galway. This module aims to promote empathy and increase social responsibility, values and behaviours among students. The module aims to equip students with the knowledge and confidence they need to interact with others in more caring, respectful and constructive ways. It also aims to motivate them to engage in more prosocial and civic actions within their school and communities.

Nutrition

Good health and nutrition are the foundations of successful learning and living. Students will build on their prior knowledge and challenge misconceptions of what a 'healthy diet' consists of. Students will become familiar with different diets from all over the world, know the six components of food and build on their knowledge of the food pyramid and different dietary requirements. Students will realise that they can make a positive impact on the environment and their local communities by researching local traders in their areas and see the benefits of 'buying local'. Students will be empowered to read food labels and make healthier lifestyle choices.

ASSESSMENT

Students will study a **maximum of ten subjects** for assessment by the SEC. One of the most significant changes in the new Junior Cycle is in the area of assessment. A dual approach to assessment has been introduced that supports students in their learning over the three-year period. There is a reduced emphasis on one externally assessed exam and increased prominence given to Classroom Based Assessment (CBA).

Subjects will be assessed through:

- two structured CBAs (one in Second year and one in Third year), reported to the parents/guardians by the school
- an Assessment Task (marked by the SEC) in each subject
- and a Final Examination set, held and marked by the SEC

The combination of the Assessment Task (AT) and the Final Examination marked and awarded by the SEC will generate a grade.

The CBAs will be undertaken by students in a defined time period within class contact time to a national timetable and the NCCA will provide a specific timeline for each CBA.

On completion of the second of the CBAs, students will complete a written Assessment Task on what they have learned and the skills and competencies that they have developed in that assessment. The Assessment Task, along with the final examination at the end of Third Year, will be marked by the State Examinations Commission (SEC).

REPORTING

Each student will receive a composite **Junior Cycle Profile of Achievement (JCPA)**. This will document the full range of the student's learning achievements.

The JCPA will reward achievement across all areas of learning as applicable:

- Subjects
- Short courses
- Wellbeing
- Priority learning units
- Other areas of learning

Students will be aware of their results before receiving the JCPA. In the case of both the SEC grades and the Classroom-Based Assessment tasks, students will already have received the results of assessments prior to the awarding of the JCPA. Students will receive a provisional statement of results from the SEC in the September following completion of Third Year as is current practice. In the case of CBA related to subjects, students will receive the results shortly after completion in Second and Third Year.

Junior Cycle Grading System

Achievement will be recorded using the following set of grades:

LEVELS
A = Ard/Higher G = Gnáth/Ordinary <i>(Irish, English & Maths only)</i>
C = Common <i>All other subjects</i>

Grade Descriptor	Percentage
Distinction	≥ 85 to 100
Higher Merit	≥ 70 and <85
Merit	≥ 55 and <70
Achieved	≥ 40 and <55
Partially Achieved	≥ 20 and <40
Not Graded (NG)	≥ 0 and <20

<i>Classroom Based Assessment (CBA) Descriptors</i>
Exceptional
Above Expectations
In Line with Expectations
Yet to Meet expectations

