



The Spiritual Life of the School Policy

Reviewed September 2021

1. **LORETO MISSION STATEMENT**

- 1.1 Loreto educational communities in England are centred in God, rooted in Christ and animated by the spirit of Mary Ward, the foundress of the Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary.
- 1.2 We are proud to be part of an international network of Catholic schools and colleges and we will work to interpret and apply the international guidelines for Loreto Education within the context of England in the early 21st century.
- 1.3 Within our schools and college the story of Mary Ward will be re-interpreted to, and by, each new generation. Her vision and values will find expression in the experience offered to, and shaped by, our students, parents, staff and governors.
- 1.4 We are ambitious for our students not just in the context of academic excellence but also in the context of human possibilities, and as educators we will stretch hearts as well as minds.
- 1.5 We invite our students to be women and men who use their gifts and talents to make a difference both globally and locally; men and women of courage who will challenge accepted notions and modes of society when they are at odds with the values for which we stand.
- 1.6 We will strive rigorously for the achievement of both personal and academic excellence within learning communities that:
 - introduce students to a reflective way of thinking and living and encourage seekers of **truth** who will search critically for answers to the great questions of life;
 - encourage doers of **justice** who will stand with those on the margins of life and become responsible global citizens and agents of social change, committed to building a better world;
 - allow all the **freedom** to become their best selves and to take charge of their own lives and futures within environments that celebrate diversity and nurture independence of spirit;
 - develop relationships that are marked by a Christ-like respect and compassion and characterised by integrity and **sincerity**, and
 - are **joyful** places where students enjoy their learning and flourish in a safe and healthy environment where the value of each individual is celebrated.
- 1.7 In order to live out this mission, our aims at Loreto St Albans are as set out below.

2. **AIMS**

- 2.1 To be a school where all members of the community live according to Gospel values and the principles and teachings of Mary Ward, promoting the virtues of freedom, sincerity, justice, truth and joy, to allow all members of the community to feel secure and able to work and live in an atmosphere of courtesy and respect.
- 2.2 The Governors seek to ensure that the values of Mary Ward are reflected in the planning and delivery of all policies. The principle values covered by this policy are:
- **Truth** – This policy aims to demonstrate how through education, prayer and worship pupils will be encouraged to develop into adults who recognise the uniqueness of the individual and the need to live out the Gospel message.
 - **Joy** – The spiritual life of the school will celebrate the value of the individual and allow everyone to develop their beliefs in a supportive atmosphere.
- 2.3 The Governors seek to ensure that the values of Mary Ward are reflected in the planning and delivery of all policies. The principle values covered by this policy are:
- 2.4 To create a community in which prayer is central, the spiritual life is valued and each person is supported in his or her faith journey.
- 2.5 To create a caring and stable environment, in which each person is respected as an individual with unique gifts, talents and ambitions, and is given the freedom and confidence to develop these.

3. **GUIDING PRINCIPLES**

- 3.1 Collective worship is central to the Catholic Life of our schools.
- 3.2 All worship, prayer and religious education organized by the school is in accordance with the liturgical practice and teachings of the Catholic Church.
- 3.3 Religious Education has a central place in the curriculum.
- 3.4 All members of staff are expected to be committed to the aims of the school, to support its Catholic ethos and assist the students in developing their faith. Appropriate Inset is provided at regular intervals.
- 3.5 In all lessons, activities and discussions with students, members of staff will be mindful of the teachings of the Catholic Church and seek advice if needed in dealing with potentially controversial issues.

4. **ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

- 4.1 The Governing Body has responsibility for agreeing and maintaining the principles underlying the school's policy, reviewing and endorsing agreed strategies. Each member will provide an example of Gospel values and the vision of Mary Ward in his or her dealings with everyone in the school community. The Governing Body is also responsible for setting our criteria for pupil admission to Loreto, ensuring that these give priority to practising Catholics.
- 4.2 The Headteacher and Leadership Team will oversee the framing of an appropriate policy on the spiritual life of the school. A draft will be given to the Governing Body to be considered and approved after any necessary consultation with other stakeholders. The Headteacher and Leadership Team will also organize support for the implementation of the policy.

4.3 The Head of Religious Education, in consultation with the Leadership Team, will be responsible for advising all staff on liturgical and doctrinal matters. Heads of Department, the PSHE and Heads of Year are responsible for the implementation of this policy within their areas. All members of staff, including teachers, support staff and volunteer helpers, will ensure that they are fully aware of the policy and that the policy is consistently applied.

4.4 Parents are responsible for upholding the ethos of the school by supporting their own children in their faith and spiritual development.

4.5 **IMPLEMENTATION OF THE POLICY**

4.5.1 Religious Education

4.5.1.1 Religious Education is accorded high status in the school: it is delivered by specialist teachers and is a core subject for all pupils. Teachers are familiar with diocesan policy and avail of the support and training offered by the Diocese of Westminster. The school follows the RE Curriculum Directory. The subject of Religious Studies is offered at A Level, with a course in General Religious Education, emphasizing faith development and formation, being provided for any Sixth Former. In addition, all Sixth Form students are given the opportunity to study Catechetics, which allows them to develop their own faith in sharing it with primary school children. As well as their timetabled lessons, each year group has an annual day of retreat organized by the R.E. Department. Members of the department take the lead in promoting the liturgical life of the community and in advising other members of staff on matters to do with the teachings of the Catholic Church.

4.5.2 Prayer and Worship

4.5.2.1 Prayer and Worship, religious life and the atmosphere of the school complement the work being done in Religious Education lessons. All students will have the opportunity to experience the Church's liturgical practices and to give Christian service to others.

4.5.2.2 Both the beginning and end of each pupil's life at Loreto is celebrated in a dedicated Mass. With their Form Tutors and Head of Year, Year 7 pupils prepare a Mass of Welcome, which they attend with their parents, during their first term here. On their last day in Year 13 the girls have a Mass to celebrate and to reflect on their development over the past seven years. Year 11 celebrate a special Mass in preparation for their examinations. The end of each academic year is marked by a whole school Mass on the last day of each Summer Term.

4.5.2.3 Each week, a member of the Leadership Team takes religious assemblies with KS3, KS4 and Sixth Form; these focus on prayer and are informed by the liturgical calendar. Each year group also has its own assembly during the week, arranged by the Head of Year and involving pupils from the year. On any day when there is no general assembly, form prayers, usually led by the pupils, take place in the form rooms. At the end of the autumn and spring Terms, the R. E. department, with other members of staff and with a number of pupils, organize special assemblies focusing on the true meaning of Christmas and Easter.

4.5.2.4 A priest from one of our feeder parishes celebrates a voluntary Mass, prepared by an R.E. class, in the chapel at lunchtime on Fridays. A number of whole school Masses are arranged in the local church of St Alban and Stephen at various key points in the year. In particular, the birthday of the foundress of the order is celebrated on 23rd January. Teaching staff and students attend these ceremonies. No one can be compelled to pray, but compulsory attendance provides the opportunity for corporate prayer and worship. Whilst attendance is required and respect for the norms of communal and liturgical worship is to be expected, such provision involves only an invitation to actual participation in prayer. Governors are also welcome to attend whole school masses.

- 4.5.2.5 During Advent and Lent, prayer and penitential services take place in the chapel, encouraging students to reflect on the great feasts of the church and their own spiritual life.
- 4.5.2.6 Staff Briefing each Monday begins with a short prayer and each Inset Day includes a liturgy in the chapel at the start of the day.

4.5.3 The Common Good

- 4.5.3.1 The girls are encouraged to live their faith and develop their spirituality through service to others in many ways, including the running of fund raising events for charity, organized by all year groups. Every Christmas, each form prepares a hamper for the needy. Sixth Formers take part in a range of events to support fundraising for their chosen charities.

4.5.4 Pupils

- 4.5.4.1 The spiritual life of the pupils is developed in all of the ways indicated above. Pupils are involved as much as possible in the preparation of form prayers, assemblies, prayer services and Mass. They prepare prayers, read the scripture, perform liturgical drama or dance, or use their musical talents in singing and playing instruments. In addition, girls are encouraged to take on the responsibility of R.E. Prefect, assisting with the liturgy, or of being commissioned as Eucharistic Ministers. In all lessons, as appropriate, as well as in assembly and form time, each pupil is encouraged to reflect on her faith and how this influences human relationships. Opportunities for pupils to understand and respect other faiths are provided in the R.E. syllabus.

- 4.5.4.2 A vibrant Justice and Peace (JPIC) group meets regularly and also organises a range of fundraising events.

4.5.5 Staff and Governors

- 4.5.5.1 Care is taken in the recruitment of staff, to ensure that each member of the community is supportive of its Catholic ethos. At the beginning of each academic year, an induction weekend is arranged in the Bar Convent in York, to introduce new staff to the Loreto family and to the ideals of Mary Ward. At regular intervals, on INSET days, staff members are also given training in spiritual matters, such as the teachings of St Ignatius
- 4.5.5.2 The trust board, in collaboration with all Loreto schools, has introduced a programme of inset delivered to all staff on Teaching and Learning. For September 2018 the Loreto Education Trust Board introduced a new Governors Handbook and this was developed collaboratively by representatives of the board of governors across Loreto schools.

4.5.6 The School Environment

- 4.5.6.1 The symbols of our religion and reminders of the spiritual legacy of Mary Ward are prominent throughout the school. Each classroom has a crucifix; each form room has a poster reflecting the virtue of Mary Ward after which the form is named; the Blessed Virgin Mary is venerated in statues in school and a small shrine in the grounds; there is a special prayer corner focused on the Sacred Heart; pictures commemorating the life of Mary Ward, painted by a Loreto sister, line the Chapel Corridor and the foyer.

5. **MONITORING AND REVIEW**

- 5.1 The Leadership Team will monitor the implementation of this policy and will report to the relevant Governors' committee. The Governors will review the policy regularly as part of their programme of policy review and may consult with students, staff and parents in this process.