

Faith Formation Policy



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**Loreto Secondary School,
Letterkenny**

2020

INTRODUCTION

Care of faith and education remain central to the Loreto Tradition. (IBVM Constitutions 2:10)

Sharing in the education mission of the Catholic Church, Loreto Secondary School, Letterkenny, models and promotes a philosophy of life based on belief in God, finding God in all things, striving to live out our Gospel values, convinced of the dignity and destiny of each individual.

While maintaining a catholic ethos, Loreto schools welcome students of different faiths and of none. Multicultural and multi-faith dialogue is fostered through religious education as a core subject for Junior Certificate students. Inclusivity and the celebration of diversity are hallmarks of a Loreto school. (Kolkata Guidelines 2003)

Faith Formation in Loreto, Letterkenny

Faith Formation is understood as pupil centered and this reflects both the mission of the Catholic School and the distinctive ethos derived from the Loreto Tradition. Irrespective of religion each person is loved into existence by God and each person is free, rational, relational and a moral agent. This key insight lies at the core of Faith Formation in the school, determining the quality of relationships there and influencing the nature of the interaction between the religious educator and each pupil. In moving with the young person from egocentricity to otherness, the religious educator accompanies each pupil on their personal journey.

The Catholic School is fundamentally an education community that cherishes and celebrates faith in all of its diversity and helps to nourish it, hence the importance of developing a wide knowledge base in religious education, supported by prayer, liturgy and visual reminders in sacred spaces. Religious, spiritual and moral values are present in all school activities and discipline and pastoral structures have an important role to play in creating an educating community inspired by Gospel values.

POLICY

Mission Statement

Loreto Secondary School, Letterkenny is a Catholic school committed to the development of the whole person. The school endeavors to develop student responsibility for learning in a safe, caring and spiritual environment, where each individual experiences personal success and fulfillment.

Ethos

Fostering the Loreto ethos is an essential element of faith formation in Loreto, Letterkenny. Relationships within the school are characterized by the core values of Mary Ward; respect, justice, honesty, sincerity and joy.

Rationale

As a Catholic school, Jesus Christ is at the heart of our community and Gospel values permeate the whole school experience. The faith formation policy is therefore concerned with a whole school vision which promotes personal faith and spirituality, grounded in the Christian tradition and in dialogue with changing life experiences. The policy is inclusive in orientation being conscious of new cultural demands and sensitivities. An important aspect of such sensitivities is care of the context in which religious education takes place. It requires that those involved deliver a programme of the highest standards. Consultation and collaboration with the school's partners in education strengthens this orientation and becomes, in religious education, an enlivening factor for the school and the wider community.

Aims of Faith Formation in our School

The overall aim is to awaken our students to faith and to provide them with the ability to enable and encourage them to deepen and strengthen that faith throughout their lives.

In Loreto, Letterkenny we specifically aim:

- To build on/support the Catholic ethos of our school, which seeks to embrace the whole school community, endeavoring to help all students realise their full potential and use their talents for the service of others.
- To foster personal faith and spirituality, encouraging students to ask and seek answers to important questions in their search for meaning in life.
- To deepen their appreciation and understanding of the Catholic Tradition
- To deepen their understanding of world religions and to promote mutually respectful and inclusive attitudes towards all students of different social, ethnic and religious backgrounds.
- To encourage students to see faith as a living entity and become actively involved in their faith communities, both in school and at home.
- To foster an understanding of the importance/relevance of prayer and reflection in their lives, providing opportunities for prayer in all forms – private reflection, communal prayer and the sacraments.
- To celebrate and acknowledge Catholic feasts and mark other religious festivals in an appropriate manner.
- To contribute to the student's moral development and to develop their sense of social justice, promoting generosity, compassion, justice, respect and peace.

Curriculum: as per the RE Policy

Liturgy

Liturgical celebrations take place throughout the school year and are prepared by the students, where possible, with the assistance of the R.E. team, the music and art teachers. Careful attention is paid to specific liturgical moments in the Church calendar through classes, decoration of sacred space and, in some cases, provision of the sacraments. The following are of special note:

Advent
Christmas
Lent
Holy Week
Ester
Pentecost

Milestones in the school calendar are celebrated through carefully prepared liturgy

Mass to celebrate the new School Year
Remembrance Evening
Carol Service
Weekly celebration of the Eucharist during Lent
Sixth Year Graduation Mass
Thought for the Week

The R.E. team will respond appropriately to any local or global concerns which require communal prayer.

Attendance at R.E.

Religious education in our school is a core subject at Junior Certificate level and is for students of all faiths and none.

Retreats

Throughout their six years in Loreto, Letterkenny, the students are offered a variety of retreat experiences ranging from pilgrimage to group reflection. The retreats offer the student time away from the routine of school and allows her to focus on her faith journey in a positive atmosphere and structured environment.

Timetabling

Junior Cert students are following the State Examinations curriculum and are timetabled for three class periods per week.

Senior students who have opted to take Religious Education as a Leaving Cert subject are time-tabled for 5 classes per week. Non exam classes are timetables for up to 3 classes per week.

Staffing

All teachers of R.E. are required to possess qualifications in the subject that satisfy the Teaching Council and the Diocesan authorities. All R.E. teachers are required to work as a team. The teamwork is fostered and maintained by the department co-coordinator. The role of the co-coordinator can be rotated.

Each team member takes responsibility for organizing at least two key events in the liturgical calendar of the school year. R.E. teachers attend regular in-service provided by the Diocesan Advisors, Subject Association and the Loreto Network.

Parents and Guardians

Faith Formation takes place in the context of the entire Christian community of which the Catholic school is just one element. The primary teachers in the journey of faith are the parents/guardians.. Loreto Secondary School Letterkenny develops this partnership through communication, collaboration and participation in the following ways:

- Provision of information through the school brochure and information evening
- Provision of subject information booklets, which contain the structure and content of the R.E. curriculum.
- Opportunity for parents/guardians to meet the R.E. teachers at parent/teacher meetings, where they can discuss the personal progress and faith development of their daughter on an individual basis.
- Correspondence and consultation regarding annual retreats, where they are given an outline of the content and the philosophy of the particular retreat and asked for their permission for their daughter to participate
- Opportunity to attend and participate in some school liturgical celebrations.
- Provision of year appropriate support created to help parents/guardians face the key moments/challenges in their daughter's development

Parish/Diocese

We, as a school are an authentic expression of the Church which is present in society and the world. We therefore recognise the importance of working closely within the parish context, which is a wider expression of Church. The focus on partnership, initiated in the consultation process, is carefully nourished and developed. The R.E. department will explore ways to deepen our involvement with the faith life of the parish and the wider community.

Loreto, Letterkenny has an obvious affinity with St Eunan's Cathedral and the Church of the Irish Martyrs. The school works closely with the parish in the following areas:

- School liturgies
- Consultation with regard to content, form and themes of the above
- Class masses, special liturgies and para liturgies.
- Fostering links with class groups and staff
- Developing school parish links

We welcome the input of the diocesan advisors when they visit the school. Teachers are made available to meet with the advisor. We attend the annual in-service for RE teachers and Chaplains provided by the Loreto Education Centre.

Faith in action/Faith in the World/Living Faith

Loreto Letterkenny recognizes the importance of students living out their faith. Students are encouraged to empathise with and show compassion for local and global issues. They are given opportunities to live out the Christian values which are at the heart of the Loreto ethos. The Faith Formation policy is an expression of the school's commitment to encouraging students in a lifelong quest for the development of a just society. All teachers are encouraged to include this focus in their teaching.

The chief components of the programme are awareness, fundraising and participation.

Awareness/Participation

Through the following experiences students are given the opportunity to become aware of and participate in causes with which they could become involved and to which they could make a positive and meaningful contribution:

- Listening to and engaging with speakers from a wide variety of backgrounds.
- Joining JPIC (Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation); a voluntary after school group which aims to heighten students' awareness in relation to issues of justice, particularly the Millennium Development Goals, This initiative is supported by the Loreto Education Office.
- The R.E. team supports the Justice & Peace Group and Saint Vincent De Paul and encourage the students to become involved.
- Development Education is a key component of Loreto Letterkenny, introducing students to issues of global concern and investigating their root causes. Encouraging student to become critical thinkers and activists in local and global development education issues.

Fundraising

On a practical level students become involved in fundraising for many causes. Most of these fundraisers are run on a cross-curricular, pastoral level. They are fully supported by the R.E. team.

**Ratified on 25th September 2018
To be reviewed in 2020**