



Religious Education Policy
Our Lady's Terenure, Dublin 6W

Oct 2017 - Apr 2018

School Mission Statement

Our Lady's School is a community that embraces Christian values. The education it provides is rooted in a deep sense of faith.

We aim to create a positive inclusive environment which enables everyone to reach their full potential. We promote mutual respect within the school community and strive to provide a happy and secure atmosphere which fosters a love of learning.

We encourage the development of the whole person, by fostering the personal, spiritual and moral development of every student. The realisation of individual talents and academic excellence is paramount.

We aim to create a friendly healthy safe and caring environment which affirms our pride in the school.

We promote the development of the necessary skills so that students may become responsible members of society. It is our wish to see every student leave Our Lady's School with moral integrity and a heightened sense of social conscience.

1. Rationale

Our Lady's Terenure is an all-girls Secondary School run by a Board of Management under the trusteeship of Le Chéile. The distinctive philosophy of the school is derived from the Sisters of Religious Education (Religious of Christian Education), founded by Fr. Louis Lafosse. Lafosse founded a school with an educational system based on academic excellence and the development of the whole person. He wished to create a happy, joyful atmosphere, where pupils could develop their talents.

In Our Lady's we endeavour to continue to provide a caring community and a supportive environment which encourages each student to develop her full spiritual, intellectual, moral, emotional and social potential/conscience. Education in this school is person-centred and holistic.

As a Catholic school the person of Jesus Christ is at the heart of our community and Gospel values permeate the entire school experience.

The purpose of this policy is to recognise the complex framework of Religious Education in Our Lady's School. Religious Education is considered from a multifaceted approach; it is a platform for providing religious information, faith formation, personal moral development, social and cultural awareness, Senior Cycle RSE, and the celebration of religious ceremonies. It encompasses the different layers of learning that students are exposed to in RE.

2. Context

In the context of our rationale we recognise the significant role Christianity plays in shaping our vision of ourselves, our world, and our relationships with others. At the centre of our rationale we acknowledge the role the school has in facilitating the spiritual development of our students.

We acknowledge that the fabric of the Catholic school population in Ireland has changed considerably. Growing secularism and multiculturalism bring students of other faith traditions and no faith traditions into the Catholic school environment. There are varying levels of faith experience and faith commitment in our school reflecting the wider cultural context of the Church in Ireland today.

Within this context we endeavour to facilitate all students, while remaining true to the characteristic spirit of our school and the Gospel values that motivate Catholic education.

3. Aims of R.E. in the School

The aims and objectives of the Department of Education, Religious Education Syllabus and our school:

- To foster an awareness that the human search for meaning is common to all people of all ages and at all times.
- To explore how this search for meaning has found, and continues to find expression in religion.
- To identify how understandings of God, Religious traditions and in particular the Christian tradition, have contributed to the culture in which

we live and continue to have an impact on personal lifestyle, interpersonal relationships and relationships between individuals and their communities and contexts

- To appreciate the richness of Religious traditions and to acknowledge the non-religious interpretation of life.
- To contribute to the spiritual and moral development of the student.
- To invite a response to God with love and gratitude through a variety of experiences, through the celebration of the liturgical year and the use of religious symbols.
- To respond to the needs of the wider community through social and community care projects (Faith Friends/carol singing in nursing homes/Charity work/gifts to the crib, etc.)

In summary, the religious education of students in our school 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.

4. Subject Provision

Religious Education is a core subject in our school.

Number of class periods in each year:

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

5. Assessment

- Assessment for Junior Cycle students will be formative and summative: continuous assessment and classroom based assessment.

6. Facilities and Resources

- The Oratory
- Chaplain's Office and Chaplain's notice board.
- Sisters of the community visit regularly - Anam Caras
- I.T. - iPad, classroom projector
- Computer Room
- Class set of textbooks
- Shared resources on Google Drive/Docs
- Thought of the Week boards - located at entrance to the school/reception

7. Retreats

Retreats seek to include all students of the school. Retreats encourage an awareness of the spiritual in students' lives and teaches them about the different forms of prayer, rather than exposing them solely to sacramental experiences. Retreats are of benefit to students of all faiths and those of none; they provide an opportunity to explore mindfulness and meditation. They provide time and space to discuss, reflect, pray and meditate on an array of topics prevalent in the lives of each year group.

One day retreats are organised for Junior and Senior Cycles. These are reviewed every year.

8. The School Chaplain

A vibrant, creative and accessible Chaplaincy exists in Our Lady's School.

It is an integral and vital part of the school life. The Board of Management, management, teachers, Care Team, parents/guardians and Chaplain are committed to maintaining the Christian ethos of the school and the implementation of its mission. The Chaplain works in close association with all the members of the school community. Students have a central role in all religious celebrations throughout the year. We are very grateful to the Carmelite Order, who provide celebrants for masses throughout the school year. The Chaplaincy position is funded by the Religious of Christian Education.

9. Prayer and Ritual

Our school strives to celebrate the liturgical seasons throughout the academic year. We mark liturgical events and seasons; Advent, Christmas; Carol Service and Christmas Crib, Lent; Ash Wednesday and the Lenten Ceremony, and Easter. We aim to recognise and acknowledge the major feasts of other traditions.

The Catholic characteristic spirit of our school is celebrated throughout the year. The whole school come together to celebrate the Opening Year Mass marking the beginning of the academic year. Each of the Houses celebrate a House Mass which is timetabled each year. The whole school gathers together celebrating the Nuns' Feast Day which is an annual celebration in memory of Fr. Louis Lafosse and the Sisters of Religious Education. To mark the end of the school life of our sixth year students we celebrate the Graduation Mass.

Senior Cycle students are offered the opportunity to avail of training to become Ministers of the Eucharist, allowing students to distribute Holy Communion during school masses.

Our Oratory is an important aspect of the students' personal faith experience. Time is set aside for each class to take part in meditation, mindfulness and reflective group activities. The Oratory is open during break and lunch time for prayer and reflection for all students and teachers.

10. Inclusion of Students of Other Faiths

Religious Education is a core subject on the school curriculum and an integral part of the ethos of our school. All pupils are encouraged to participate in RE. Our Catholic identity is clearly stated in our Admissions Policy: Our Lady's School "is a voluntary secondary Catholic school". Parents or guardians of all students are aware of the Mission Statement on enrolment. Parents or guardians who are concerned about the content of the RE class can contact a member of the Religious Education Department.

It is important to note that the syllabus is a state syllabus, written to encompass all faiths and none. 'Religious Education should ensure that students are exposed to a broad range of religious traditions and to the non-religious interpretation of life. It has a particular role to play in the curriculum in the

promotion of tolerance and mutual understanding. It seeks to develop in students the skills needed to engage in meaningful dialogue with those of other, or of no religious traditions.'

Our Lady's School supports the principles of: Respect for the diversity of values, beliefs, traditions, languages and ways of life in society.

11. Withdrawal from RE Class

Our Lady's School recognises that some parents have concerns and may wish to withdraw their child from RE class, as is their constitutional right. If a parent or guardian wishes to withdraw their child from lessons in RE they must contact/meet their child's allocated Religion teacher. 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. A withdrawn student will be supervised in the RE class.

If a parent or guardian requests that their child is not present during RE, the responsibility for supervision at such times lies with the parent or guardian, not the school.

12. Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE)

R.S.E. is located in the overall framework of S.P.H.E. In Our Lady's School the Senior Cycle RSE Programme is the responsibility of the RE Department. All Senior Cycle RE teachers are required to attend the Senior Cycle RSE S.P.H.E two day inservice.

R.S.E. is the responsibility of the Religion Department at Senior Cycle and all Senior Cycle teachers provide students with the required minimum of six R.S.E. lessons per Senior Cycle year. If a parent/guardian wishes that their child is withdrawn from R.S.E. class, they must inform the school in writing.

10. Conclusion This policy was ratified by the Board of Management on
