



NPRE (Non Participants in Religious Education) Policy

Mission Statement

Loreto Secondary School, Balbriggan is a Catholic girls' secondary school. In the spirit of Mary Ward, we aim to develop all the abilities of our students in order that they realise their full potential and use their talents for the service of others. We also aim to encourage self-confidence and self-esteem in a happy atmosphere and structured environment. The school community, collaborating together in mutual respect, strives for holistic excellence.

Characteristic Spirit and Ethos

The characteristic spirit of Loreto Secondary School, Balbriggan is based on Mary Ward's core values of justice, freedom, sincerity, truth and joy. Loreto Balbriggan's ethos is holistic and person centered. Faith development, recognising God's presence in all things, is at the core of the school's educational philosophy. The school encourages students to use their talents in the service of others and to the greater glory of God. Students are encouraged to strive for excellence at the level of each one's potential in all areas of life and work. The school aims to safeguard and communicate this characteristic spirit and it is central to all subject areas, particularly our Religious Education programme.

Religious Education in Loreto Balbriggan

The general aim of Religious Education is to continue to awaken our students to faith and to help them throughout their lives to deepen and strengthen that faith. Religious Education is a non-examinable subject in Loreto Balbriggan, open to students of all faiths and none. As a Catholic School we are mindful of the faith formation of our students and of the opportunities to develop the three strands of: expressing beliefs, exploring questions and living our values. Religious Education ensures that, with Christianity placed at the center of the conversation, students of all faiths and none are invited into that conversation and provided with the full opportunity to reflect on their own beliefs. Religious Education 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 non-religious traditions. In

the spirit of inclusivity and dialogue and in ensuring that we meet the requirements of the Education Act in developing all aspects of the person it is desirable that all students study Religious Education. Therefore, it is a core/compulsory part of the school curriculum.

For those who do not wish to Participate

Our characteristic spirit is clearly stated in our Admissions Policy and Mission Statement and is communicated to the Parent/Guardian at the information evening and in all relevant literature made available to the parents/guardians at this point. The curriculum provided includes the provision of three periods of Religious Education per week.

Standing in the truth of who we are, in dialogue with others who stand in the truth of who they are, we in Loreto Balbriggan are cognisant, that at the heart of catholic schooling is openness with those of all faiths and none. Multi-cultural and multi-faith dialogue is integral to the lived experience of our students. As with all aspects of the core religious values of our school, inclusivity and diversity are supported in all religion classes and in the topics examined and studied.

Despite this, we recognise that some parents/guardians may wish to withdraw their child from the Religious Education class, as is their constitutional right. The school has arranged that the allocated time on the timetable for Religious Education will be used by students of other faiths or none to study material relating to their own religious traditions or philosophical thinking, An NPRES student will be supervised in the Religious Education class. If a parent/guardian insists that their child is not present during a Religious Education class, then the supervision of the student will be the responsibility of the parent/guardian.

School Procedures in the event that student chooses to withdraw from Religious Education class.

Once the student has secured a place in the school and expresses a wish to opt out of R.E. the procedure is as follows:

- The student approaches her R.E. teacher and requests permission to opt out of R.E. classes. The teacher gives the student a copy of the information pack which has been compiled for such an event.
- The student and parents/guardians read the information pack and complete the form attached requesting that the student formally opt out of R.E. classes. This form is returned to the R.E. teacher involved.
- Parents of students opting out of R.E. should meet or have contact with the Religion teacher and if necessary a member of the senior management team.
- An official list/data base will be drawn up, each year, of those students who do not do R.E. The reason for the student's non participation is also recorded so that all parties in the process are kept informed.

Content of Information Pack

Parents of NPRE students are informed of the standing of Religious Education in Loreto, Balbriggan as a subject for “all religious faiths and none”. The information pack is sent home to ensure clear communication regarding what is expected of the NPRE student. The pack includes the following:

- Outline of Junior and Senior Religion courses
- Letter outlining the place and function of the R.E. course in the context of our aim to provide a holistic education of every student in Loreto Balbriggan.
- Statement of the recognition of the constitutional right of the parents to opt out of R.E. and how the responsibility of the spiritual and moral development of the student must still be met, in accordance to that same educational right of the student.
- An outline of what the NPRE student is expected to do during R.E. class. No homework is permitted and a list of suggested tasks and activities is recommended. As part of our NPRE programme students who opt out of participation in the RE class can study agreed texts either provided by the school or home.
- A list of relevant, agreed, books and papers or documents which are made available by the school for the NPRE student during the R.E. class. Parents, Guardians and students are free to suggest and submit additional texts or learning materials in consultation with the Religion teacher and school management. The texts should be appropriate and in line with the spirit of the NPRE policy.
- A request that the parents specify which books they are happy for their daughter to study.
- A form to confirm that the student will be opting in/out.
- Notification of the fact that RSE may be taught during senior R.E. class as part of the SPHE programme and that there would be an expectation that the student attends these classes.

Bibliography

Guidelines on the Inclusion of Students of Other Faiths in Catholic Secondary Schools, Second Edition 2019 (JMB/ACCS secretariat).

Mullally, A. (2016), ‘Looking in the Mirror: Accommodating Students of Different Beliefs in Catholic Secondary Schools, Joint Managerial Body Annual Conference, Killarney.

Continuing the Journey; A Loreto Education.

Junior Cycle Religious Education Specification: (Dept. of Education and Science and NCCA 2019)