

OUR LADY'S SECONDARY SCHOOL



CURRICULUM POLICY

Our Lady's Mission Statement

Our Lady's Secondary School is a holistic centre of development and learning where each person is special and treated as such. We, the staff and students, enjoy working together to realize our full potential in a healthy, safe, stimulating and friendly environment where the atmosphere is one of mutual respect, cooperation and challenge. Christian community is our heritage and goal, the Good News of the Gospel is our story.

School Context

Our Lady's Secondary School is a Voluntary Catholic School under the trusteeship of CEIST. The school is Co-Educational and currently has approximately 730 students and over 60 teachers as well as a range of ancillary and support staff. The school has a Board of Management composed of Trustee Nominees, Teacher Nominees and Parent Nominees. The Board of Management delegates the day-to-day running of the school to the Principal. The school supports the principles of inclusiveness, equality of access and parental choice in relation to enrolment. In supporting these principles it also recognizes the rights of the Trustees CEIST, the Religious and Educational Philosophy of the Sisters of Mercy and the funding and resources available.

Mercy Philosophy of Education

Inspired by the vision of Catherine McAuley, Mercy Education is committed to holistic development and to the achievement of the full potential of each student, particularly those who are disadvantaged or marginalised. It is a process informed and influenced by the teaching and example of Jesus Christ and is conducted in an atmosphere of care, respect and joy. Mercy Education is committed to ongoing whole school development in collaboration and partnership with the Board of Management, Staff, Students, Parents/Guardians and the wider community.

CEIST Core Values

The Core Values of CEIST are:

- Promoting Spiritual & Human Development
- Achieving Quality in Teaching and Learning
- Showing Respect for Every Person
- Creating Community
- Being Just and Responsible

<u>Introduction</u>

In Our Lady's Secondary School we aim to provide a broad and balanced curriculum, with access to mathematical, scientific, linguistic, technological, social and human, physical and aesthetic and creative areas. This policy is supported by appropriate subject plans which ensure appropriate coverage and assessment in all subject areas from First Year to Sixth Year.

We aim to provide an environment of striving for excellence by encouraging and supporting students to reach their full potential. Students are also given opportunities to develop their personal and social skills in order to prepare them to take their place in society as educated and responsible citizens.

We therefore aim to provide a curriculum and education that provides children with opportunities to develop their own values and beliefs and a positive caring attitude towards other people as well as fostering an understanding of their social and cultural traditions and an appreciation of the diversity and richness of other cultures.

Aim

We aim to provide a curriculum that:

- Is based around the NCCA but also challenges students in other areas.
- Ensures that all students are challenged and supported to reach their full potential.
- Provides students with a sense of achievement.
- Provides progression of learning and differentiation.
- Develops positive attitudes to learning.
- Provides opportunities for students to learn independently.
- Enables the students to develop knowledge, understand concepts, acquire skills and develop the ability to choose and apply these in relevant situations.
- Provide opportunities for further learning through provision of additional activities such as educational tours, guest speakers, field trips etc.

Outside the structured curriculum we aim to provide a wide range of extra-curricular opportunities that encourage students to develop many skills relevant to the main curriculum and their own personal development.

Objectives

- To outline the subject and course options available to students in all years.
- To outline the procedures for allocating students to classes.
- To outline the procedure for facilitating movement.
- To outline the procedure for the provision of additional student support.

Programmes

The following programmes are offered to our students:

- Junior Cycle
- Junior Certificate Schools programme
- Level 2 Learning Programme
- Transition Year
- Leaving Certificate
- Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme
- Leaving Certificate Applied

Junior Certificate

Core subjects:

English; Irish(except when eligible for an exemption); Maths; French/German; Science; Religion; History; Geography; P.E.; Wellbeing. On occasion the number of core subjects taken by a student may be reduced, in consultation with parents, to facilitate additional help in their remaining subjects.

Optional subjects:

Home Economics; Music; Business Studies; Art, Craft and Design; Technical Graphics; Materials Technology (Wood)

New Junior Cert Curriculum and Assessment Specifications:

The new Junior Cycle specifications were introduced/are being introduced as follows:

Phase 1: English – Introduced to 1st Year students Sept 2014 .First recorded on J.C.P.A.* Autumn 2017.

Phase 2: Science and Business Studies-Introduced to 1st Year students Sept 2016. First recorded on J.C.P.A. Autumn 2019

Phase 3: Irish; French; German, Art, Craft and Design, Wellbeing-Introduced to 1st Year students Sept 2017. First recorded on J.C.A.P. Autumn 2020

Phase 4: Mathematics, Home Economics, History, Music, Geography- Introduced Sept 2018. First recorded on J.C.A.P. Autumn 2021

Phase 5: Materials Technology(Wood);Technical Graphics-Introduced Sept 2019. First recorded on J.C.A.P. Autumn 2022.

J.C.P.A.* =Junior Certificate of Pupil Achievement

Junior Certificate Schools Programme

Special Class for Mild General Learning needs

The Special class comprises of three class groups (1,2,3L) catering for students with Mild General Learning needs over a possible six years of education. Students are prepared for the Junior Certificate Schools Programme and L2LP Programme.

The Junior Certificate School Programme is based on the concept that all young people are capable of real success in school and that they can have a positive experience of school if the conditions are favourable. The Programme is a national Department of Education and Science Programme within the Junior Certificate aimed at students who may leave school early.

The Junior Certificate School Programme has been designed to ensure that these young people can benefit from their time in school and enjoy the experience of improvement and success. It sets out to ensure that each individual student in the Programme experiences success and progression and to make the experience of school relevant and accessible to those young people who find it difficult to cope with the school system. It does this by providing a curriculum framework which will assist schools and individual teachers in adopting a student-centred approach to the Junior Certificate specifically aimed at those young people who show signs of school failure or early leaving. It aims to ensure that all participating students sit the same Junior Certificate examination as their peers in as many subjects as they can succeed in

In conjunction with the JCSP some students will complete the L2LP programme. The L2LP programme explicitly identifies and develops the key areas of learning needed for adult living. L2LP purposely focuses on development and learning in such areas as: elementary literacy and numeracy, language and communication, mobility and leisure skills, motor co- ordination and social and personal development

These areas are set out as five Priority Learning Units (PLUs).

- Communication & Literacy

- Numeracy
- Personal Care
- Living in a Community
- Preparing for Work

Students undertaking a L2LP are those with disabilities categorised as being in the lower mild to higher moderate range of general learning disabilities. Students will be identified through Psychological assessments or through the WRAT V assessment. Those students' with standardised scores of between 50 -70 will complete the L2LP Programme

These students will benefit from an L2LP as it purposely focuses on development and learning in such areas as: elementary literacy and numeracy, language and communication, mobility and leisure skills, motor co- ordination and social and personal development.

<u>Transition Year</u>

Aims:

T. Y. aims to enable each student to:

- Grow in maturity and self-confidence.
- Focus on his / her Wellbeing.
- Develop the social and communication skills necessary to live in modern society.
- Understand and experience the world of work, business and technology.
- Prepare for Leaving Cert Programmes and assist in subject choice.
- Manage the constructive use of leisure time.

Target Group:

T.Y. is compulsory for all students with the exception of those pursuing L.C.A.

Core subjects:

Maths; English; Irish(except when eligible for an exemption); Religion; P.E. ;Social Education; Wellbeing; Microsoft Office

Optional subjects:

French; German ;Business ;Home Economics ;Chemistry ;History ;Construction Studies; Geography; Accounting; Music; Physics; Biology; Economics; Design& Communication Graphics, Agricultural Science, Politics and Society, PE and Art.

Students are requested to select one subject from each of four option lines. The option lines are drawn up following a survey of student preferences and may vary from year to year. Subject selection is not rigid and students may change options subject to availability of space. Entry to certain subjects which students have not pursued for Junior Certificate., may be facilitated where certain conditions are met and in consultation with the Guidance Counsellor, relevant teacher and Principal.

Modules:

Students will be offered a number of modules from which they will select one rolling module, three half year modules and one full year module.

The modules may include: Equestrianism, Sport & Leisure, Cookery, Self-Defence; Dance, Yoga, Keep-Fit, Creative Crafts, Dance; Drama, Sport & Leisure, Tag Rugby; Environmental Studies, Musical Theatre, G.A.A. Skills, Coding, Politics, Retreat, Yearbook, Debating, Technology and Design, Horticulture, Pilates, and Mini-Company.

The range of modules offered may vary from year to year subject to student demand and the availability of teaching staff and resources.

Work Experience:

All students do two weeks work experience in two different companies/firms/businesses/schools etc. Students are responsible for sourcing their own placements in consultation with the T.Y. Co-ordinator. The option of completing work experience is subject to Public Health advice.

T.Y. Fee:

The T.Y fee covers those items outlined in the T.Y. Prospectus.

<u>Leaving Certificate</u>

Core subjects:

English; Irish (except where eligible for an exemption); Maths; Religion; Career Guidance ; P.E.

Optional subjects:

French; German; Business; Home Economics; Chemistry; History; Construction Studies; Geography; Accounting; Music; Physics; Biology; Economics; Design and Communications Graphics; Agricultural Science, Politics and Society, PE and Art. Applied Maths may be offered as an additional subject outside the school timetable.

Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme

Target Group:

LCVP is offered to students who fulfil the requirements laid down by the DES and Our Lady's Secondary School.

Aims:

LCVP aims to:

- Provide an expanded range of curricular options.
- Offer students enhanced opportunities for participation in a vocationally oriented curriculum.
- Provide certification that is respected for its quality and standard of educational achievement.

Programme:

The LCVP student will pursue a programme which includes:

- A continental language
- Enterprise Education
- Preparation for Work
- Two L.C. subjects from approved groupings.
- Irish(except where eligible for an exemption)
- At least one other approved L.C. subject

Leaving Certificate Applied

The Leaving Certificate Applied is a distinct, self-contained Leaving Certificate programme. It is designed for those students whose needs, aspirations and aptitudes are not adequately catered for by the other two Leaving Certificate programmes. It is offered every year subject to a viable number of applicants. Students may enter this programme directly following Junior Certificate subject to the programme being offered. This programme is characterised by educational experiences of an active, practical and student-centred nature. There are three subject groups:

- **General Education:**
 - Social Education; Communicative Irish; French / German; Religion; Arts Education; Leisure and Recreation.
- **Vocational Education:**
 - Vocational Specialism; Mathematical Applications; Information Technology
- **Vocational Preparation:**
 - Vocational Preparation and Guidance; English and Communications.

PROCEDURES & PROTOCOLS

First Year

All first year classes are mixed ability. Aptitude tests are held for 6th class students who have enrolled for the following school year. The tests are held around December. Every effort is made to ensure that classes are balanced both in terms of ability and gender. Prior to choosing their optional subjects students are given an opportunity to sample all option subjects. Following the sampling period an Information Evening is held for first year parents and students then make their choice. The arrangements for changing subjects are outlined in Appendix (1).

Second Year

At the start of second year students are banded for Maths; Irish and English on the basis of their exams and class work in First Year. In exceptional circumstances (e.g. Covid crisis), with

agreement from Senior Management and teachers the banding of classes may be delayed until the end of first term of second year. Procedures for the formation of such classes are outlined in individual faculty plans. We strive to ensure that all students pursue their studies at the level most appropriate to their ability and work rate. This may on occasion necessitate movement of class from higher to ordinary level or from ordinary to higher level. Students may only change their optional subjects in exceptional circumstances. See Appendix (1). It is the policy of Our Lady's Secondary School to encourage students to pursue their subjects at the highest possible level for as long as possible.

Third Year

Students confirm the level they intend to take in Irish, English and Maths when making their exam entry, which takes place after the pre-exams and prior to the State Examinations. All other third year exams are at a common level. Change of level on the day of the exam requires written notification from school management. Students moving from one class to another due to changing level must follow agreed procedures. [See Appendix (1)].

It is normal practice for all Junior Certificate students to take nine examination subjects. In a minority of cases, it may be decided that a student may benefit from a smaller number of subjects and additional support in the core subjects. The circumstances and procedures in such cases are outlined in Appendix (1).

Fourth Year

Arrangements re. T.Y. are outlined above. Given the ethos of T.Y.; the early selection of subjects and the fact that Junior Certificate results may cause students to review their subject choice; maximum flexibility is shown to students with regard to changes in subject choice. See Appendix(1).

Fifth & Sixth Year(Traditional Leaving Certificate)

Students normally take seven Leaving.Certificate subjects. The option lines may vary from year to year. At this stage students are discouraged from changing subject. See Appendix(1). Students select a level when making their exam entry but may change on the day. Students transferring from other schools must do three years post Junior Certificate.(with the exception of L.C.A. students).

Homework

The school has a written homework policy which is found in the School Plan

Assessment

The school has a separate assessment policy which was ratified by the Board of Management in December 2019 and appears on the school website.

Role of Principal

The Principal is the “Leader of Learning” in the school and as such oversees and monitors all areas of teaching and learning. The allocation of students to classes, teachers to classes and teacher timetables are the sole prerogative of the Principal. Student and parental choice in relation to subjects and levels will be facilitated as far as possible. Parental requests for the allocation of students to specific teachers cannot be accepted. The Principal advises the Board of Management on curriculum issues following consultation with parents; students and staff.

Role of Board of Studies

The Board of Studies is a sub-committee of the Board of Management. Its’ membership comprises a number of teachers representing the views of the various faculties within the school. Its’ role is to monitor curricular provision and advise the Board. A new Board of Studies is appointed by each new Board of Management.

Policy review: This policy to be reviewed every three years. It was ratified by the B.O.M. on April 15th 2021

Review date: May 2022

Signed: *Gary Carville*

Dr Gary Carville (Chairperson B.O.M.)

Appendix 1

Procedure for changing classes.

Class Sizes:

Home Economics.....	20
Science & Practical Subjects.....	24
All others.....	30

First Year

First Years are given at least six weeks to sample optional subjects and then they, in consultation with parents, choose two. In as far as is possible their choices are accommodated but this is not always the case. Taking into account their age and the fact that they are new to the second level system, we should be as flexible as possible in accommodating changes after the initial selection process.

Procedure for change:

- Student should discuss the matter with the Guidance Counsellor.
- Parental permission must be obtained.
- Preferably teacher will be informed by Guidance Counsellor that student is joining class.
- Student must be accommodated if class size, as outlined above, permits.
- Teachers should not allow students to change unless the above procedure is followed.

Fourth Year.

Students select their four optional subjects at the end of Third Year. The Programme Coordinator then draws up subject groupings which are given to the Principal for timetabling and to teachers. Given the ethos of Transition Year, the early selection and the fact that JC Results may change minds it is imperative that maximum flexibility is shown to students.

Procedure for change:

- Student should discuss the matter with Programme Coordinator, later in the year this discussion should be with Guidance Counsellor.
- Parental permission must be obtained.
- Preferably teacher will be informed by Programme Coordinator\Guidance Counsellor that student is joining class.
- Student must be accommodated if class size, as outlined above, permits.
- Teachers should not allow students to change unless the above procedure is followed.

Second & Fifth Years.

At these stages a significant amount of course work has been covered, therefore changes should be discouraged but cannot be prohibited.

Procedure:

- Matter should be discussed with the current teacher.
- Implications of move should be fully discussed with Guidance Counsellor.
- Teacher of new subject must be consulted.
- Parental permission must be obtained.
- Student must be accommodated if class size, as outlined above, permits.
- Teachers should not allow students to change unless the above procedure is followed.
- The onus is on the student to catch up on any course work missed and this fact should be communicated to him\her by teacher of new subject.

Third & Sixth Years:

Only in extraordinary circumstances would a move at this stage be considered.

Procedure:

- Matter should be discussed with the current teacher.
- Implications of move should be fully discussed with Guidance Counsellor.
- Teacher of new subject must be consulted.
- Parent should discuss the change with the Principal before any decision is reached.
- Student must be accommodated if class size, as outlined above, permits.
- Teachers should not allow students to change unless the above procedure is followed.
- The onus is on the student to catch up on any course work missed and this fact should be communicated to him\her by both the Principal and teacher of new subject.
- Any student who has not followed these procedures should not be admitted to a new class but should be told to follow the procedures first.
- In all cases the onus is on the student to catch up on any course work missed.
- When a student has followed the procedures he/she must not, under any circumstances, be turned away from a class. If the teacher is unhappy with the move the student should be admitted temporarily until the teacher has an opportunity to discuss the matter with the Principal.

Procedure for giving up a subject.

All Junior Cycle students are expected to take nine examination subjects in addition to Religious Education, Physical Education and Wellbeing. All Senior Cycle students are expected to take seven examination subjects in addition to RE & PE (4TH. & 5TH Years). There are additional Modules and subjects for Transition Year students.

It should be extremely rare for any student not to follow the school curriculum as outlined above. A very small number of students have exemptions from Irish and only those with exemptions are excused from taking the subject. In a minority of cases it may be decided that a student can benefit from a smaller number of subjects and additional support in the core subjects.

Before a student is given permission to give up a subject or to sit in the class and do other work:

- The matter must be discussed with both the Guidance Counsellor and Learning Support Teacher.
- The Principal must be kept informed.
- The parents\guardians must be given the opportunity to discuss the matter with the teacher.
- The parent\guardian must put the request in writing.

Written approval must be given to the teacher by the Principal.

Every effort will be made to provide students in this position with Learning Support. If this is not possible he\she will have to remain in the assigned class.

All this is necessary to safeguard you and the school from litigation in the future.

Commented [1]: If a student does not complete a CBA2 in Art they may not sit Art as a Junior Cert Subject . They have no choice in the matter , it is a DES recommendation. This may be similar for other subject areas? Should this be included here?