

OUR LADY'S SECONDARY SCHOOL



CURRICULUM POLICY

Our Lady's Mission Statement

Our Lady's Secondary School is a Voluntary Catholic Secondary School operating under the trusteeship of CEIST according to the traditions of the Sisters of Mercy. We, the staff and students, enjoy working together to realise our full potential in a healthy, safe, stimulating and friendly environment where the atmosphere is one of mutual respect, cooperation and challenge. We take a holistic approach focusing on the wellbeing and development of each individual socially, culturally and academically. Within our school community, each student is treated equally. All are considered uniquely talented, with effort valued as much as excellence. On a day-to-day basis, the Christian message inspires everyone in the school to be charitable, inclusive and understanding.

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 870 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

Introduction

At Our Lady's Secondary School, we are committed to providing every student with access to a broad and balanced curriculum that supports achievement, growth, and creates a future pathway to a fulfilling career. Our curriculum ensures opportunities for learning across the mathematical, scientific, linguistic, technological, social and human, physical, and aesthetic and creative disciplines. This is guided by carefully developed subject plans that guarantee continuity, progression, and effective assessment from First Year to Sixth Year.

We foster an environment where endeavour and excellence is encouraged and supported, enabling each student to achieve their full potential. Alongside academic learning, we place strong emphasis on personal development, providing opportunities for students to grow in confidence, resilience, and social responsibility. Our aim is to prepare students for the widest possible range of educational and career pathways. We encourage them to develop their own values and beliefs, while also nurturing a positive and caring attitude towards others. In doing so, we seek to promote respect, empathy, and a deep appreciation of social, cultural, and global diversity. Through this holistic approach, Our Lady's strives to ensure that every student is supported, challenged, and inspired to succeed and prepared them to take their place in society as educated and responsible citizens.

Aim.

We aim to provide a curriculum that:

- Is grounded in the NCCA framework while also offering challenge and enrichment beyond it.
- Ensures that all students experience high expectations, appropriate support, and opportunities to succeed.
- Promotes a strong sense of personal achievement and pride in learning.
- Provides clear progression of learning with effective differentiation to meet the needs of all learners.
- Encourages positive attitudes towards lifelong learning.
- Offers opportunities for students to take ownership of their learning and to develop as independent, self-motivated learners.
- Equips students with the knowledge, skills, and understanding to apply learning confidently in real and relevant contexts.
- Enhances learning through additional opportunities such as educational tours, guest speakers, workshops, and field trips.

Beyond the formal curriculum, we are committed to providing a wide range of extra-curricular opportunities. These experiences allow students to further develop skills that complement their academic studies, build character and resilience, and support their personal and social growth.

Our overall goal is to ensure that every student leaves Our Lady's with a strong sense of achievement, well supported in their journey, and fully prepared to pursue the educational and career pathways that best reflect their talents and aspirations.

<u>Objectives</u>

The objectives of this policy are:

- To clearly outline the full range of subject and course options available to students at each stage, ensuring access to pathways that support individual talents, aspirations, and future goals.
- To set out fair and transparent procedures for allocating students to classes, ensuring that all students are appropriately challenged and supported in their learning.
- To describe the processes in place for facilitating movement between subjects, levels, or programmes so that students can follow the most suitable pathway for their achievement and progression.

Our Special Education Needs Policy outlines the procedures for providing additional support to students, ensuring that every learner has access to the resources and guidance needed to reach their full potential. Our Assessment Policy details procedures in that area. Meanwhile, the Homework Policy details the level of work expected from students outside the classroom. Each of these policies is linked to, and informs, the Curriculum Policy.

<u>Programmes</u>

The following programmes are offered to our students:

- Junior Cycle
- Junior Certificate Schools programme
- Level 1/2 Learning Programme
- Transition Year
- Leaving Certificate
- Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme
- Leaving Certificate Applied

Junior Cycle

Core subjects:

English; Irish (except when eligible for an exemption); Maths; French/German; Science; Religion; History; Geography; P.E.; CSPE & SPHE. 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; Visual Art; Graphics; Wood Technology, Applied Technology.

Wellbeing

Students also have a minimum of 400 hours of Wellbeing education at Junior Cycle in areas such as Civic, Social and Political Education, Physical Education, and Social Physical and Health Education.

The subject specifications and assessment guidelines for both the exam subjects and the Wellbeing-related short courses are designed by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment. Further details are available on Curriculumonline.ie.

Junior Certificate Schools Programme

Special Class for Mild General Learning needs

The Special Class comprises four class groups (1,2,3, 4L) catering for students with Mild-Moderate General Learning needs over a possible six years of education. Students are prepared for the Junior Certificate Schools Programme and L1LP/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 Schools 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 L1LP and L2LP programme. The L1LP programme is for students who cannot access the L2LP. These are the 1L students who have moderate GLD.

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

Short courses undertaken include Grow it, Cook it, Eat it and Animal care.

Students undertaking a L1LP and 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 L1LP and 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.

Senior Cycle L1LP and L2LP programmes are in the process of being introduced

<u>Transition Year</u>

Aims:

The new TY Programme is designed around the development and learning of students moving from Junior Cycle into Senior Cycle, and as they prepare for their future lives as local, national and global citizens. The new programme will nurture the development of the student as a whole person by building on their previous experiences, through a curriculum that is aligned to the TY Programme Statement. The curriculum will also aim to create space and opportunities for meaningful, enjoyable learning experiences through which the key competencies of the student can be developed in the classroom and school, in the home and in their role as local, national and global citizens. The programme also aims to expand the student's experience and awareness of diverse future pathways and nurture the student's capacity to sustain their growth and development through a process of lifelong learning and to evolve continuously to support the learning and development of the student through a reflection and renewal process involving students, teachers, school leaders, parents and community partners.

Target Group:

TY is compulsory for all students with the exception of those pursuing LCA.

Core subjects:

Maths; English; Irish (except when eligible for an exemption); Religion; PE; E-Portfolio; Microsoft Office

Sample subjects:

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

Students are required to select two subjects 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 sampling will take place over a period of months before students make their final subject choice. If numbers choosing a subject are low, it may not be a sustainable way to manage school resources to offer that subject in a particular year. Entry to certain subjects which students have not pursued for Junior Cycle, 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-year long module, one 10-week modules, one 6-week module and one musical module.

The modules may include: Equestrianism, Sport & Leisure, Cookery, Self-Defence; Dance, Yoga, Keep-Fit, Creative Crafts, Junk Kouture, Life Skills, Active Schools, Dance; Drama, Sport & Leisure, Tag Rugby; Environmental Studies, Musical Theatre, Future Leaders G.A.A. Skills,

Coding, Politics, Retreat, 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 three weeks work experience in three different companies/firms/businesses/schools etc. Students are responsible for sourcing their own placements in consultation with the TY Co-ordinator. One week should be based in their local community, as outlined in the new TY Programme Statement.

TY Fee:

The TY fee covers those items outlined in the TY Prospectus.

<u>Leaving Certificate</u>

Core subjects:

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

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, Technology and Art. Applied Maths may be offered as an additional subject outside the school timetable.

Social Physical and Health Education is a mandatory curriculum component to support 60 hours of teaching and learning over the final two years of senior cycle education. This is being introduced in 2025/26.

The subject specifications and assessment guidelines for these subjects are designed by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment. Further details are available on Curriculumonline.ie.

Non examination subjects (Careers, PE, RE)

1. Career Guidance

The key areas of focus for guidance are:

- Personal/Social
- Educational
- Career/Vocational

1. Personal/Social

Counselling which is focused on the Personal and Social development of the adolescent allows opportunities to discuss issues around:

- Self Awareness
- Self Confidence
- Relationships
- Communication

Personal Counselling and Group Counselling will provide the environment to discuss these issues.

2. Educational

Educational counselling focuses on the following areas:

- Management of learning
- Use of resources
- Study Skills and subject choice
- Exam Techniques

Personal and Group Guidance Counselling will allow for discussion around these areas and will provide a climate in which the student feels comfortable discussing and sharing concerns and issues arising from these topics.

3. Vocational

Vocational Counselling allows the student opportunities to focus on:

- Vocational information
- Assessment procedures
- Choices

Providing an environment in personal or group guidance counselling allows students to share concerns and explore choices in relation to vocational exploration with their peers and/or Guidance Counsellor.

2. Religious Education

At Junior Cycle and Senior Cycle, the Religious Education curriculum is influenced by the school's ethos. The Curriculum is delivered in a way that is inclusive of those of all faiths and none. The objectives in terms of Religious Education are;

1. To provide students with a clear basic knowledge of Christianity, with emphasis on the life of Christ and his teaching;
2. To establish the link between Christianity and our society;
3. To introduce students to the key figures, culture and special celebrations of some of the other world religions: Islam, Hinduism, Christianity, Judaism, Buddhism;
4. To give opportunities for students to reflect upon and to develop their personal experiences of Faith and Belief;
5. To encourage students to listen, without prejudice, to beliefs that are different from their own.
6. To encourage students to develop a clearer and more positive image of their own identity and self worth.
7. To provide opportunities for students to respond to spiritual and moral issues.
8. Junior Certificate students should keep a glossary of key words and meanings at the start of each unit of work in order to aid correct spelling, understanding of meaning and correct use of the words.
9. Opportunities should be given for the students to explain, question, evaluate and appreciate the religious quest in humanity and so respect the religious dimension of all life and living.
10. Opportunities should be given for students to actively participate in school liturgies, if they wish.

3. Physical Education

The aim of the senior cycle physical education framework is to encourage learners' confident, enjoyable and informed participation in physical activity while in senior cycle and in their future live. Further details of the NCCA's Senior Cycle Physical Education Framework can be found at www.ncca.ie.

Leaving Certificate Applied and Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme

Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP)

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 **Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP)** is an optional programme within the Irish Leaving Certificate, designed to add a practical, work- and career-focused element to the traditional Leaving Cert. It is a 2-year programme.

- It's not a separate qualification but a **link module** programme that complements the regular Leaving Certificate.
- Students take their normal subjects plus **two link modules**:
 1. **Preparation for the World of Work**
 2. **Enterprise Education**

Assessment

- The two link modules are assessed through:
 1. Portfolio of coursework (60%)
 2. Written examination (40%)
- Results are awarded on a separate LCVP grade scale:
 1. Distinction (80–100%) = equivalent to a H4 in Leaving Cert
 2. Merit (65–64%)
 3. Pass (50–64%)

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. From 2025 onwards, students entering year one of the LCA programme will be required to study the new Senior Cycle Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) curriculum specification. The fundamental goal of the Leaving Certificate Applied is to prepare Leaving Certificate participants for transition from the world of the school/centre to that of adult and working life. 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.

<u>PROCEDURES & PROTOCOLS</u>
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First Year

All First Year classes are mixed ability. Aptitude tests are held for First Year students in early September. Every effort is made to ensure that classes are balanced both in terms of ability and gender. After Christmas in First Year students are banded for Maths on the basis of their exams and class work in the previous term.

Prior to choosing their option 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 Irish and English on the basis of their exams and class work in First 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 Cycle 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

As well as TY modules, students are required to select two subjects 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 sampling will take place over a period of months before students make their final subject choice. Entry to certain subjects which students have not pursued for Junior Cycle.,

may be facilitated where certain conditions are met and in consultation with the Guidance Counsellor, relevant teacher and Principal.

Fifth & Sixth Year (Traditional Leaving Certificate)

Students normally take seven Leaving Certificate subjects. The option lines may vary from year to year. Procedures for changing subjects are detailed in 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 Cycle with the exception of L.C.A. students.

Homework

The school has a written Homework Policy which is available for download on the school website.

Assessment

The school has a separate Assessment Policy which appears on the school website.

Role of Principal

The Principal has overall responsibility for teaching and learning across the school. Part of this role includes overseeing class groups, teacher timetables, and the allocation of teachers and students to classes. While we do our best to accommodate student and parent preferences regarding subject choices and levels, it is not possible to meet requests for placement with specific teachers. The Principal also keeps the Board of Management informed on curriculum matters, taking into account the views of parents, students, and staff through ongoing consultation.

Role of Board of Studies

The Board of Studies is a sub-committee of the Board of Management. It includes teachers from different subject areas who represent the views of their departments. Its main role is to review and monitor curricular provision and to provide advice to the Board. All staff have the opportunity to contribute, either by being directly involved on the committee or by sharing information and feedback through their subject department. Through this work, the Board of Studies helps to ensure that the curriculum continues to support high levels of student achievement, provides appropriate support, and offers clear educational pathways for all learners.

This Curriculum Policy should be read in conjunction with our Admissions Policy, which outlines the entry criteria for various classes and programmes, as well as procedures for requesting exemptions or opting out of specific subjects.

Policy review: This policy to be reviewed every three years. It was ratified by the 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 / seven 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 a period of sampling. Given the ethos of Transition Year, the early selection and 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.
- 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:

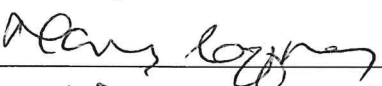
- Matter should be discussed with the current teacher.
- Implications of move should be fully discussed with Guidance Counsellor.
- Teacher of new subject must be consulted.
- Parental permission must be obtained.
- Student must be accommodated if class size, as outlined above, permits.
- Teachers should 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.

Signed:  (Chairperson of the Board of Management)

Date: 11th December 2025

Date of next review: December 2027

Procedure for giving up a subject.

All Junior Cycle students are expected to take nine examination subjects in addition to Religious Education, Physical Education, CSPE & SPHE. All Senior Cycle students are expected to take seven examination subjects in addition to Guidance, 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 and/ or Principal.
- The parent/guardian must put the request in writing.

Written approval must be given to the student & 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.