



LORETO EDUCATION IN ENGLAND

VISION, VALUES AND PHILOSOPHY

PREAMBLE

In the years since the first lay Loreto head was appointed in England, there has been much reflection in the Institute and in our schools and college on the distinctive spirit that animates our educational communities. Much of this reflection has focused on how our Loreto heritage can be carried forward into a very different future. Though we are very proud of our inheritance, we have a strong conviction that our Loreto identity is not something static that is locked in the past but a dynamic reality that requires us to respond creatively to the needs of the time. We gladly take to heart the words of Pope Francis that the Christian life should not become a 'museum of memories' but rather that our lives should be enlivened by the Holy Spirit of surprises 'who makes all things new'.

It is striking how the Venerable Mary Ward's life continues to be an inspiration to Loreto educators of the 21st century and this has found expression in many key documents that the Loreto English Education Network (LEEN) has produced over the last few years. Our common mission statement published in 2007, which this document replaces, pledged that 'within our schools and college the story of Mary Ward will be re-interpreted to, and by, each new generation.' There is a very keen sense of our history in these establishments and we hope that the references to our foundation throughout this publication will help to support that statement's aspiration that Mary Ward's 'vision and values will find expression in the experience offered to, and shaped by, our students, parents, staff and governors.'

Our intention in producing this document has been to define our vision and core values and illustrate how these might shape the guiding principles and key characteristics of our schools and college in the 21st century. What follows is part of the handing on of the story so that each generation can tell it afresh. We are storytellers not of a finished story but one which we hope the reader will add to and re-interpret so that something new is always being born for the greater honour and glory of God.

OUR VALUES

SINCERITY

We develop relationships that are marked by a Christ-like respect and compassion and characterised by integrity and sincerity. We endeavour to 'be such as we appear and appear such as we are.'

TRUTH

Mindful of our Ignatian heritage, we introduce our students to a reflective way of thinking and living and encourage seekers of truth who will also search critically for answers to the great questions of life.

JOY

Our hope is for our schools and colleges to be joyful places where students enjoy their learning and flourish in a safe and healthy environment where the unique value of each individual is recognised and celebrated.

JUSTICE

We encourage doers of justice who will stand with those on the margins of life and become responsible global citizens and agents of social change, committed to caring for the earth and building a better world. We invite our students to use their gifts and talents to make a difference both locally and globally and to be people of courage who will challenge those accepted notions and modes of society which are opposed to the values for which we stand.

EXCELLENCE

We are ambitious for our students not just in the context of academic excellence but also in the context of human possibilities, and as educators we will stretch hearts as well as minds. We have an unremitting focus on excellence and set the highest standards of academic and personal achievement.

FREEDOM

We nurture the growth of that 'singular freedom' which enables each person to become their best self. We encourage our students to take charge of their own lives and futures within a learning environment that celebrates diversity and nurtures independence of spirit.

INTERNATIONALITY

We are proud to be a part of an international network of Loreto schools and colleges. We will play a full part in this network and also engage fully with the Loreto NGO at the United Nations. We will continue to interpret and apply the international guidelines for Loreto Education within the context of England in the 21st century.

FRANCES TERESA BALL
1794-1861



In 1851 Frances Teresa Ball responded to the request of Canon Toole, parish priest of St Wilfrid's church in Hulme, Manchester, to send sisters over from Ireland to work in the local community.

Loreto Manchester was the twenty second house founded in thirty years by this remarkable woman. Her philosophy of education was dedicated to truth and goodness and was based on a desire for excellence: *'whatever is done for God should be well done.'* Like Mary Ward, her approach was ahead of its time. The curriculum in her schools, for example, was much broader than provided in other schools of the time and her schools involved parents in decisions about their children's education long before this became the norm. Her life was animated by love, compassion and a strong commitment to justice.

MARGARET ALPHONSA ELLIS
1823-1905



Margaret Alphonsa Ellis came from Ireland to Loreto Manchester as superior in 1856 and held that position until her death in 1905. She had a profound influence on the development of Loreto education in Manchester and beyond. She was a born educator who believed in the fundamental goodness of each person and she had that rare combination of strength and gentleness. She was a straightforward person who modelled Mary Ward's instruction *'to be such as we appear and appear such as we are.'* She was a highly intelligent woman with a strong sense of humour and fun, and a great gift for what we now call strategic thinking. She understood the needs of the day and had the courage to respond to those needs in ways that were ground-breaking for the time. Loreto educators in England owe much to her resilience and staying power and to what the Rector of St Bede's, Manchester, in 1901 described as her *'intelligent educational policy, broadminded sympathy and wise statesmanship.'*

OUR RELIGIOUS EDUCATION PROGRAMMES

- ◆ are grounded in the person of Jesus Christ and the teachings of the Catholic Church
- ◆ meet students where they are and accompany and challenge them on their faith journey towards an ever deeper understanding of what gives meaning to their life
- ◆ foster respect for intellectual questioning and debate, and take place in an atmosphere of freedom where each person's belief is respected and other faiths and traditions are explored.

We take inspiration from the fact that Mary Ward had an ability to see beyond the short-sightedness and rigidity of individual clergy to the Church that Christ founded, and that it was as, and not in spite of being, a faithful and loyal daughter of that Church that she challenged many of the existing attitudes.

'The future of humanity lies in the hands of those who are strong enough to provide coming generations with reasons for living and reasons for hoping.' (Vatican II)

'In working with young people, do not try to call them back to where they were, and do not try to call them to where you are, as beautiful as that place may seem to you. You must have the courage to go with them to a new place that neither you nor they have ever been before.'

(A young person quoted in Vincent Donovan's
'Christianity Re-discovered')



Tapestry - Paula Widdicombe

THE CLASSROOM EXPERIENCE

Our approach to teaching and learning is influenced by 'the Ignatian Learning Process' which

- ◆ considers the **context** of a student's life
- ◆ fosters **experience** that moves students beyond a cognitive grasp to an affective response
- ◆ uses an approach that stimulates **reflection** on the deeper meaning of what is being studied
- ◆ encourages students to be open to truth that leads to **action**
- ◆ places great value on **evaluation** which leads to positive feedback.



Our guiding principle is that relationships in Loreto classrooms will be friendly and affirming and based on a Christ-like respect and compassion. Care for the individual is paramount and teachers teach a person first and a subject second.

CHARACTERISTICS

Teaching is authoritative

- ◆ students are taught by skilled practitioners with a passion for, and a mastery of, their subject
- ◆ the methods used are informed by sound research and model best practice.

Classrooms are inclusive environments

- ◆ there are no barriers to learning
- ◆ each student is challenged and supported to achieve his or her personal best
- ◆ different gifts are recognised and diversity is celebrated.

FOUNDATION

"The course of teaching here has been consistently abreast of the best methods of the day." (the Rector of St Bede's in 1901 speaking of Loreto Manchester under Margaret Alphonsa Ellis)

"Whatever is done for God should be well done." (Frances Teresa Ball)

Mary Ward recognised the diversity of human beings and understood that each had a unique set of needs: *"see all of the different persons as we are all on the same earth but we require different directions."*

Frances Teresa Ball asked her educators to take care that *"those who are more prompt and forward be still advancing and those who are slower in learning be not neglected."*

SUPPORT AND GUIDANCE

Support of the whole person is the responsibility of every member of staff, both teaching staff and support staff.



CHARACTERISTICS

Teachers and tutors have a privileged access to young people in their role of helping them manage their learning and manage themselves. They are in a special position in mediating the values of love and compassion and in challenging our young people to achieve personal and academic excellence.

All staff in our educational communities – administrative, technical, finance, estates – have an important role in building an environment in which the dignity of the person is respected and their education enhanced.

We work in partnership with parents and carers, the primary educators of our young people. We keep them well informed and involve them fully in the life of our schools and colleges.

Our values are often tested when incidents occur that are contrary to the standards to which we aspire. Our criteria for action is the greater good of the individual and the school/college community, within a spirit of compassion and forgiveness.

FOUNDATION

In the earliest Loreto schools discipline was based on love not fear. Frances Teresa Ball directed her sisters to show gentleness and kindness to their pupils, to avoid harshness and severity, to correct with a spirit of mildness, inspiring love rather than fear. She also understood the pointlessness of nagging! *“If you give the children a long lecture, your words will sound like the clapper of the bell and they will begin to count the panes of glass in the window.”*

A former pupil of Margaret Alphonsa Ellis wrote *“it cheered me to meet her accidentally in the corridors for I always thought she looked at me as if she loved me and saw the good in me.”*

At the heart of the work of leaders and managers at every level is the development of an environment dedicated to the achievement of personal and academic excellence. We are never satisfied with a lesser good when a greater good is possible. To this end the professional development of staff is given a high priority.

Leaders establish those structures that are most favourable for releasing creativity, for fostering wise risk-taking and for developing the capacity for imagining something new that may diverge from existing ways of thinking and acting.



Governors

- ◆ stand in critical solidarity with senior leaders and ensure that any initiative, policy or action has a favourable impact on our students and their learning and takes the school or college closer to the kind of community envisioned in this document
- ◆ combine the requirement to be innovative, flexible and adapt to new ideas quickly, with a reflective way of thinking that leads to wise decision making
- ◆ model the values in the way they conduct their business
- ◆ commit to sharing what they do well with other Loreto schools and colleges and, where appropriate, the wider community.



Detail from 'The Painted Life' Augsburg

FOUNDATION

Margaret Alphonsa Ellis *“has from the first shown herself to be fully alive to all the demands of educational progress and ready to crest the rising wave of scholastic development. She has shrunk from no new departure, no bold experiment that the times have seemed to call for.”*
(The Rector of St Bede’s in 1901)

Mary Ward had the ability to take a step without always seeing the way ahead clearly. In the ‘Glory Vision’ of 1609 she glimpses that something new can be born that will give God greater glory, though what that will be remains shadowy.

The Institute *“has all along given proof not only of wonderful vitality and fecundity, but also of adaptability to the changing need and circumstance of the time, and has kept abreast of the successive developments and improvements in every department of educational progress.”*
(The Rector of St Bede’s in 1901)