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Kathryn Keigher IBVM, JPIC co-ordinator
Maureen Mee, (Editor) LEEN Executive
Sarah O'Neill, Loreto High School, Chorlton, Manchester
Andrea Pritchard, Loreto Sixth Form College, Manchester
Rachel Robinson, Loreto College, St Albans
Anne Skilki, Loreto Grammar School, Altrincham
Rachael Stephens, Loreto Preparatory School, Altrincham
Bernadette Turtle IBVM, (Graphic Design co-ordinator) Loreto Education Officer



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.

THE ROOTS OF LORETO EDUCATION IN ENGLAND

The distinctive spirit of Loreto education in England has been shaped by a succession of strong women who were marked by courage, intelligence, vision and a love of God. The names of many of these Loreto sisters are known only to those they have influenced in the classrooms and staff rooms of, for example, Altrincham, Manchester and St Albans. The names of three women, however, who laid the foundations and set the direction that Loreto education would take in this country, are well known to all the Loreto family. The first of these women, the Venerable Mary Ward, came from Yorkshire and founded in the seventeenth century what later became known as the Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary. The other two – Frances Teresa Ball and Margaret Alphonsa Ellis – were Irish; in their contact with England in the nineteenth century they were part of a long history of Irish influence on the English faith stretching back to the sixth century.

MARY WARD 1585-1645

Mary's desire was to respond to the needs of the time and to provide an education appropriate to the differing needs of her students. Much of what she introduced was innovative and challenged many of the prevailing views of 17th century society. Perhaps her most controversial belief was that women should be given the same educational opportunities as men. Most clergy of the time saw women as weak and as a source of temptation; they were descendants of Eve – 'the last to be created and the first to sin.' For their own, and men's, protection, they needed enclosure either by marriage or a convent wall. In contrast, Mary believed that if only men would stop making women believe they could do nothing, then they would be able to do great things.

She wrote of her desire to provide girls with 'the education in schools and communities which will seem most suitable for the common good of the Church and their own particular good whether they choose to spend their lives in the world or in religious life.' In light of the continuing oppression of women in parts of our world, her ambitions for women continue to have much relevance.

The schools she founded had a reputation for excellence. Mary demanded high standards from her teachers and believed in supporting them to the hilt in achieving those standards. Much care was taken in choosing appropriate teachers, in supervising their work and in providing training for them. Her dream was to set up schools in her native land and she wrote of the need for these schools to be of the highest possible standard: 'if done it must be so performed as better cannot be.'



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.'*

VISION AND VALUES IN ACTION

THE LIVED EXPERIENCE OF THE SCHOOL/COLLEGE COMMUNITY

It is our hope that our vision and values will find expression in every aspect of our schools and colleges. In this section we have endeavoured to describe the guiding principles and distinctive characteristics of the student experience and link these to our foundation. These principles and characteristics though distinctive, are not unique nor is the statement intended to be exhaustive. The lived experience stands or falls on the quality of relationships in our communities.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION AND SPIRITUALITY

A spiritual dimension permeates the whole of our education

OUR SPIRITUALITY IS ROOTED IN THE IGNATIAN TRADITION IN WHICH MARY WARD WAS STEEPED



- ◆ God can be found in all things: *'all things in this world are gifts of God, created for us, to be the means by which we can come to know him better, love him more surely and serve him more faithfully.'* (St Ignatius of Loyola) As a later Jesuit, Fr Gerard Manley Hopkins, expressed it: *'the world is charged with the grandeur of God.'*
- ◆ Our own experience in day-to-day living is where God speaks to us: *'God is with me and I have the freedom to speak to him and ask him all I would have or know.'* (Mary Ward)
- ◆ In humility, through the invitation to prayer, worship and reflection that we extend, we pray that our students gain that *'free and open access to God'* of which Mary Ward spoke; to the God who is *'Parent of parents and Friend of friends.'*

Our spirituality finds particular expression in the work of Chaplaincy. It has an important role in helping students to strengthen their relationship with God through prayer, liturgy and action and in helping them reflect on their hopes and fears, dreams and gifts.

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 CURRICULUM

The design of the curriculum, whilst conforming to statutory requirements, is centred on the development of the whole person as a member of the human community. The curriculum drives aspirations, it takes students to places they did not know they could reach and it is central to our desire to enable our students to meet with confidence the challenges of a changing world.

FOUNDATION

Mary Ward's schools provided an education appropriate to the differing needs of her pupils. In the 'day schools' the pupils were taught not only religion and reading and writing (and Latin if they had the aptitude) but also some trade by which to earn a living in the future. In some parts of Europe these schools were so successful in teaching proficiency in knitting, embroidery and sewing that there were complaints that they were depriving the brothels of their labour force! This truly is an example of education that transforms lives.

The curriculum in her schools had many innovative features. It included, for example, exercises in rhetoric and provided opportunities for acting in, and producing, plays. This was so that the students might learn to speak with confidence and authority. In an age when women's voices were rarely heard in public places, and even more rarely listened to, these were daring innovations which caused outrage in some quarters.

CHARACTERISTICS

The curriculum is dynamic and flexible and thus **responsive** to the changing needs of the individual and of society. It is based on a realistic grasp of the needs of students who live in the 21st century.

Programmes and courses are **inclusive** and respond to the needs of young people across the widest possible ability range that local circumstances allow.

Schemes of work are **aspirational**: they are designed with the highest expectations of personal and academic achievement in mind.

The curriculum takes account of **the whole person**. Its aim is the fullest possible development of every dimension of the person.



Particular attention is paid to the **ethical** dimension of the curriculum. Where possible teachers choose curriculum themes that engage students in intellectual analysis of, for example, justice and peace issues and environmental challenges which threaten the survival of the planet.

Time is set aside for students to engage in **practical action** and be agents of social change in their local communities and beyond.

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."*

FOUNDATION

Mary Ward was filled with a desire to follow God's truth wherever it led. She was committed to speaking this truth plainly and was willing to act out of this truth at no matter what cost.

For Frances Teresa Ball the purpose of education was *"to cultivate the mind by a knowledge of truth, to inflame the will by a love of what is good."*

Margaret Alphonsa Ellis's approach at the weekly reading of marks was described as "strong and forcible" but she was loved by the children and in particular by the high spirited girls!

For Mary Ward joy is an attitude of mind and a disposition of heart which opens a person to life, to others and to the world.

Students are encouraged to develop a love of truth

- ◆ there is an emphasis on developing critical thinking and on fostering an independence of mind and spirit. Thoughtful uncertainty and considered dissent are welcomed and students are actively encouraged to explore and articulate their views.

Classrooms are joyful places

- ◆ relationships are harmonious
- ◆ praise is plentiful and assessment and feedback builds up rather than knocks down
- ◆ achievement is celebrated and the distance an individual has travelled, however small, is always recognised
- ◆ lessons are skilfully planned so that students enjoy their learning.

Independent learners are developed

- ◆ we build confidence and resilience and encourage our students to take charge of themselves and their learning
- ◆ we listen to their voice and involve them, as appropriate to their age group, in evaluating their learning experience.



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.”*

VALUES DRIVEN LEADERSHIP

The structures of our schools and colleges aim to reflect the better world that through our education we are trying to construct.

FOUNDATION

"I remember her simple, straightforwardness in conversation and her way of taking for granted the same quality in those she was addressing. One could hardly fail to respond to the confidence she seemed to have in one's good faith and good will She could, when necessary, speak very plainly and to the point."

(a contemporary of Margaret Alphonsa Ellis)

Mary Ward remained true to her principles in the face of opposition. In a letter to the Jesuit General she said she could not defuse the criticisms by modifying her innovations because they were what the rapidly changing times needed.

She showed great courage and resilience in the face of terrible setbacks, born of a strong belief that God would always help her. This trust in God gave her the nerve to engage in those risky innovations that were to bring nothing but trouble in the early days but bear such great fruit later.

CHARACTERISTICS

Leaders and managers at every level operate in a spirit of mutual respect, collaboration and transparency.

- ◆ There is an emphasis on teamwork where the contribution of each individual is sought and valued
- ◆ There is a presumption of good will by both staff and managers, based on mutual trust

Leaders and managers at every level are cultural leaders who are immersed in the Loreto values. They model these values in the way they carry out their responsibilities and have the moral confidence, courage and conviction to inspire their teams to make the values real in the day-to-day life of the school or college.



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.



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)

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.



Serve God with great love and liberty of mind
Mary Ward