

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION & ETHOS POLICY (2026)

1. DOCUMENT CONTROL

Policy Owner	Board of Governors
Drafted By	RE Co-ordinator and SMT
Date of Approval	30 June 2026
Review Date	June 2027
Related Policies	Admissions Policy (2026); Pastoral Care Policy (2026); Learning & Teaching Policy (2026); Learner Code of Conduct & Handbook (2026); Assessment and Academic Integrity Policy (2026).

2. PREAMBLE & ETHOS

Loreto Convent School was founded in 1878 by the Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary (IBVM), the Loreto Sisters, as an act of faith: the belief that educating the young is among the most important things the Church can do in the world. The school's Catholic identity is not an add-on to its educational mission — it is the source and summit of it.

Religious Education at Loreto Convent School is not catechesis in the narrow sense, and it is not indoctrination. It is a structured encounter with the Catholic intellectual and spiritual tradition, offered in dialogue with other faith traditions and with the questions of every human heart. We seek to form learners who can think about faith, not merely inherit it.

The ethos of the school is not contained in the RE classroom. It permeates the school's entire life — its liturgy, its community, its service, its discipline, and its relationships. Every policy in this suite is, in some sense, an expression of the school's Catholic ethos. This policy makes that ethos explicit and governs how it is taught, celebrated, and sustained.

Guided by the charism of Mary Ward, this policy is anchored in:

- **Truth:** We engage honestly with the questions of faith, doubt, meaning, and morality. We do not offer easy answers to hard questions. We believe the intellectual life and the spiritual life are not in competition — truth pursued rigorously leads to God.
- **Freedom:** We respect the freedom of conscience of every learner. Participation in the school's religious life is expected of all — parents accept this at the point of admission — but we do not compel belief. We invite encounter. The right to freedom of religion and conscience, as enshrined in Section 15 of the Constitution, is respected within the school's Catholic framework.
- **Justice:** Catholic Social Teaching is not an optional module in our RE programme. It is the social expression of the Gospel and runs as a thread through the entire curriculum. We form learners who understand that faith without justice is incomplete.

- **Sincerity:** Our religious life is authentic, not performative. Prayer is not a ritual obligation but an act of genuine encounter. Liturgy is prepared with care and celebrated with attention. We do not project a Catholic identity we do not practise.
- **Accompaniment:** We accompany learners in their faith journey with patience and without coercion. A learner who is uncertain, questioning, or from a different faith tradition is not a problem to be managed — they are a person to be accompanied.
- **Excellence:** Religious Education is taught to the same standard of intellectual rigour that we expect in every other subject. RE teachers are professionally trained and properly resourced. The RE/Ethos Committee appraises the programme annually and recommends improvements.

3. LEGISLATIVE & CHURCH AUTHORITY FRAMEWORK

3.1. South African Law

- *Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996 — Section 15 (Freedom of Religion, Belief, and Opinion); Section 29(3) (Right of independent schools to establish their own character, including a religious character).*
- *South African Schools Act 84 of 1996 (SASA) — Section 61: Independent schools may be conducted on a religious basis, provided that no learner is compelled to receive religious instruction that is inconsistent with the convictions of the learner and their parents.*
- *National Curriculum Statement (NCS) Grades R–12 and CAPS — Life Orientation curriculum framework.*

3.2. Church Authority

- *Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference (SACBC) — Religious Education Policy for Catholic Schools in Southern Africa (2023 edition).* The SACBC's RE Policy is the governing curriculum and methodology framework for this school's RE programme.
- *Catholic Institute of Education (CIE) —* The CIE provides curriculum support, teacher training, and assessment guidance for Catholic schools in South Africa. The school accesses CIE resources and training for the RE programme.
- *Second Vatican Council: Gravissimum Educationis* (Declaration on Christian Education, 1965) — the foundational Church document on Catholic education.
- *Catholic Schools' Trust Constitution —* s9.7, s9.8, s15.4, s15.5, s15.6, and Annexure 7: mandatory Religious Education policy and programme; RE/Ethos Committee; annual appraisal of the religious programme.

4. THE CATHOLIC IDENTITY OF THE SCHOOL

Loreto Convent School is a Catholic independent school in the Loreto tradition, owned by the Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary and governed by the Catholic Schools' Trust. Its Catholic identity is constitutive — it defines what the school is, not merely what it does. All families, staff, and learners are welcomed into this identity and expected to respect and participate in its expression, in accordance with the terms of admission.

The Catholic identity of the school is expressed through four dimensions, as described in the school's Constitution (Annexure 1: The Distinctive Religious Character of the Catholic School):

- **Worship:** The school's liturgical life — Mass, prayer, assemblies, key feast days, and the liturgical seasons — is the heartbeat of its Catholic identity. Prayer is built into the rhythm of every school day.
- **Solidarity with the poor:** The school's service and outreach programme is an expression of Catholic Social Teaching and the school's commitment to justice. Refer to the Service & Outreach Programme Policy (2026) for the full framework.
- **Religious Education:** Formal instruction in the Catholic faith, in dialogue with other traditions, is a fundamental component of the curriculum at every phase. See Section 6 below.
- **Harmony with the values of the Catholic Church:** The school's policies, practices, and relationships are consistent with and expressive of the values of the Catholic Church — dignity, justice, solidarity, subsidiarity, and care for the common good.

5. THE MARY WARD CHARISM

Mary Ward (1585–1645) founded the Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary with a radical conviction: that women could and should be active in the apostolate, in education, and in the world, under the direct authority of the Pope rather than enclosed in a convent. She was ahead of her time, challenged by the Church, and never abandoned her mission.

The Loreto charism she bequeathed is expressed in five values: **Justice, Freedom, Sincerity, Truth, and Joy**. These are not aspirational additions to the school's identity; they are its genetic code. They appear in the school's motto — *Learning and Leading in Love and Justice* — and they govern every policy in this suite.

The RE/Ethos Committee is responsible for the annual appraisal of how well the Loreto charism is expressed in the school's life and for recommending areas of renewal.

6. THE RELIGIOUS EDUCATION PROGRAMME

Religious Education is a fundamental component of the curriculum at every phase of the school, in terms of Constitution s9.8. The following table describes the RE programme across phases.

Phase	Grades	RE Status	Core focus
Foundation	RRR–3	Integrated into all subjects and daily prayer	Catholic identity, Gospel values, prayer, care for others
Intermediate	4–6	Formal RE subject (timetabled)	Scripture, Sacraments, Catholic Social Teaching, world religions
Senior	7–9	Formal RE subject (timetabled)	Morality, justice, vocation, ecumenism, social outreach
FET	10–11	Compulsory internal subject (non-NSC examinable)	Ethics, justice, discernment, service, faith integration

FET	12	RE integrated into Life Orientation and spiritual programme	Discernment, vocation, matric retreat, final year formation
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The RE programme is governed by the SACBC Religious Education Policy for Catholic schools and is supported by CIE curriculum resources. It is not examinable as part of the NSC, except where RE content is integrated into the Life Orientation curriculum for Grades 10–12.

6.1. The RE Co-ordinator

The RE Co-ordinator is the staff member designated by the Executive Principal to oversee the implementation of the RE programme across all phases. The RE Co-ordinator:

- Serves on the RE/Ethos Committee as required by Constitution s15.4.
- Co-ordinates the RE curriculum and teacher support across phases.
- Liaises with the CIE for curriculum resources, teacher training, and assessment guidance.
- Reports to the Executive Principal on the RE programme quarterly.
- Presents an annual RE report to the RE/Ethos Committee for consideration and submission to the Board.

6.2. RE Teaching Standards

- RE is taught by staff who are willing to uphold the Catholic ethos of the school. Non-Catholic staff may teach RE provided they are willing to present the Catholic tradition authentically and respectfully.
- RE teachers participate in the school's IQMS cycle on the same basis as all other teachers.
- RE teachers have access to professional development in RE methodology through the CIE.

6.3. Learners of Other Faith Traditions

Loreto Convent School welcomes learners of all faith traditions. In applying for admission, parents accept that their child will participate in the school's religious programme and practices.

Within this shared participation:

- Learners are not required to profess faith they do not hold. They are invited to engage respectfully with the Catholic tradition and its practices.
- The RE programme is designed to be respectful of and interested in other faith traditions. It teaches about religion broadly, not only Catholic doctrine.
- Parents who have specific concerns about particular religious observances may raise these in writing with the Executive Principal. The school will accommodate reasonable requests consistent with the school's Catholic character and the SASA s61 framework.

7. LITURGY & SCHOOL PRAYER

The liturgical life of the school is the primary expression of its Catholic identity. It is not a supplement to the educational programme — it is part of the formation that the school offers.

- **Daily prayer:** Every school day begins with prayer. The Angelus is prayed daily after break.
- **School Mass:** School Masses are celebrated at key points in the liturgical calendar — the beginning of the academic year, Ash Wednesday, All Saints Day, the end of the academic year, and at the discretion of the Executive Principal for significant community occasions. All learners are expected to participate respectfully.
- **Feast days:** The feast day of Mary Ward (23 January) and other significant Loreto and Catholic feast days are observed in the school's prayer and assembly programme.
- **Assemblies:** School assemblies have a spiritual dimension. They are not merely administrative events. The RE Co-ordinator advises on the spiritual content of assemblies.
- **Retreats:** The school offers at least one structured retreat experience annually per grade. Retreats are facilitated by the RE Co-ordinator, the School Counsellor, and where appropriate, external facilitators.

8. THE RE/ETHOS COMMITTEE

In terms of Constitution s15.4, the Board of Governors is required to establish a Religious Education/Ethos Committee. This Committee is the governance body responsible for the oversight and annual appraisal of the school's RE programme and Catholic ethos.

8.1. Composition

- The RE Co-ordinator (mandatory member per Constitution s15.4).
- The Executive Principal.
- The Trust Representative may attend.
- Four portfolio teachers who head: Pastoral, Outreach, Teambuilding and Liturgical.

8.2. Functions

- To receive the annual RE Co-ordinator's report and assess the quality, coverage, and delivery of the RE programme.
- To appraise, annually, the school's Catholic ethos — including its liturgical life, its service programme, its staff formation, and the degree to which the Mary Ward charism is expressed in the school's culture.
- To present a written annual appraisal and recommendations to the Board of Governors for approval, in terms of Constitution s15.6.
- To advise the Board and the Executive Principal on matters affecting the Catholic identity and religious programme of the school.

8.3. Meeting Frequency

The RE/Ethos Committee meets on a **quarterly** basis. Additional meetings may be convened at the discretion of the Chairperson.

9. STAFF FORMATION IN THE CATHOLIC ETHOS

The Catholic ethos of the school is sustained not by policy but by people. Staff formation in the Loreto charism is essential to the school's identity.

- All new staff receive an introduction to the Loreto charism and the school's Catholic identity as part of their induction, co-ordinated by the RE Co-ordinator.
- An annual staff formation session is offered, addressing the Mary Ward charism, Catholic Social Teaching, and the school's spiritual programme.
- Staff formation is an agenda item at the RE/Ethos Committee's annual review.

10. PASTORAL INTEGRATION

The RE programme and the school's pastoral care framework are not parallel but integrated. The School Counsellor and the RE Co-ordinator work collaboratively to ensure that the school's spiritual and pastoral dimensions are mutually supportive.

- Retreats and spiritual formation activities are offered in partnership with the School Counsellor.
- The pastoral response to bereavement, crisis, or significant community events draws on the school's liturgical and prayer resources.
- The RE programme addresses the emotional and existential dimensions of adolescent life — identity, purpose, relationships, suffering, and hope — in dialogue with the Catholic tradition and with honest engagement with learners' lived experience.

11. ANNUAL APPRAISAL CYCLE

In terms of Constitution s15.6, the Board of Governors is required to receive an annual appraisal of the school's religious programme, activities, and character from the RE/Ethos Committee, and to approve plans for future development. The appraisal cycle operates as follows:

1. **Term 2:** RE Co-ordinator prepares the annual RE report covering programme delivery, learner participation, teacher assessment, liturgical calendar, and outreach programme.
2. **Term 2:** RE/Ethos Committee meets to review the report and assess the broader Catholic ethos of the school.
3. **Term 3:** RE/Ethos Committee prepares its written annual appraisal and development recommendations.
4. **Term 3/4:** Board of Governors receives and approves the annual appraisal report. Plans for the following year are confirmed.
5. **Trust Representative:** Receives a copy of the annual appraisal report concurrently with the Board, in terms of the Trust's governance requirements.

12. APPROVAL

Signed on behalf of the Board of Governors:



30 June 2026

Date: _____

Fatima Rawjee

Chairperson: Board of Governors

Signed by the Executive Principal:



30 June 2026

Date: _____

Suzette Truter

Executive Principal