

MORAL AND SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT POLICY –

INTRODUCTORY STATEMENT –

It is stated in the Education Act 1998 9 (d) that ..

“ A recognised school shall provide education to students which is appropriate to their abilities and needs and, without prejudice to the generality of the foregoing, it shall use its available resources to –

..promote the moral, spiritual, social and personal development of students and provide health education for them, in consultation with their parents, having regard to the characteristic spirit of the school”.

In accordance with this directive and in keeping with best practice offered by the Department of Education and Skills and the Le Chéile Trust, St. Mary's Secondary School, Holy Faith Convent, Glasnevin, Dublin 11, has assembled this policy document. The process of assembly took place over time. The discussion was between Principal, Deputy Principal, the Board of Management, the Religion Department, the Teaching Staff and the School Development Planning Co-Ordinator.

The Le Chéile Trust Charter states on page 6 that ..

“Le Chéile Schools have a special commitment to the development of the spiritual dimension of the school and of the lives of its members. It recognises and proclaims that transformative education is essentially a spiritual process. It is the responsibility of all to witness to the spiritual dimension in their respect and care for one another.”

Therefore, the role of St. Mary's in the moral and spiritual development of the students, and by extension, the role of St. Marys in the moral and spiritual development of the whole school Community, is threefold –

- St. Mary's nurtures, promotes and provides for the students' faith development. Students are trained to think, research, reason, reflect and act in the light of the Gospel values.
- St. Mary's recognises the partnership with parents in faith development and seeks opportunities to enhance and renew the faith of parents through the education of their children and through their participation in the life of the school.
- St. Mary's recognises the role of Teachers in witnessing to Gospel values and encourages Teachers in their own on-going faith development.

ETHOS STATEMENT -

Margaret Aylward founded St. Mary's, Glasnevin, in 1873. The characteristic spirit of St. Mary's would be drawn from its roots in the characteristic spirit of the Holy Faith Order. The Sisters draw their objectives from Micah 6:8, which states that –
 “This is what Yahweh asks of you; only this, to act justly, to love tenderly and to walk humbly with your God.”

Students in St. Mary's are helped to integrate into their lives a deep Christian Faith and is inclusive of all Religious Denominations, as per Department of Education and Skills guidelines and as per the “Le Chéile Charter”. The formation, therefore, in St. Mary's, is of the Catholic tradition.

MORAL DEVELOPMENT IN ST. MARY'S –

In the “Le Chéile Trust Charter”, it states on page 8 that students who graduate from Le Chéile schools are characterised by –

“.. Moral Development - Students are invited to reflect on key moral issues and to examine their responsibility to themselves, to others, to society and to the environment. This reflection takes place within the Christian tradition”.

In St. Mary's, Glasnevin, students are encouraged by the Principal, Deputy Principal, the Board of Management and the Teaching Staff to reflect on key moral issues throughout the academic school year. The Principal / Deputy Principal along with the Teaching Staff encourage the students, and the parents of the students as deemed appropriate, to participate in such ventures. In the case of any international or indeed, national or local disaster, the students are encouraged to participate in any fund-raising drive to support the victims of such a disaster, e.g. Haiti in 2010. Students take part each school year in the Trócaire Lenten Campaign; the gathering of food items for the St. Vincent de Paul Christmas Hampers; Debates; Visitation to the Seanchara Day Centre; Guest Speakers from various Agencies and Young Social Innovators, to mention but a few activities. Further discussion on these items are to be found in the Subject Department Plans.

There is often a cross-curricular approach taken by the Teachers within the school to the moral development of the students in St. Mary's and by extension, to the moral development of the whole school community of St. Mary's. Through these and other efforts, the Principal, Deputy Principal and the Board of Management support the work of the moral development of the students and by extension, the moral development of the

whole school community in St. Mary's. The operation of this process is enhanced when each Staff member views her / his work within and outside the classroom as being interconnected with the work of every other Teacher in the overall task of delivering on the Mission Statement of the school.

Added to the above, there is a time allocation given for religious education from junior to senior levels. There is also an allocation of money given by the Principal and the Board of Management to provide for the opportunities as outlined above.

SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT IN ST. MARY'S –

In the "Le Chéile Trust Charter", it also states on page 8 that students who graduate from Le Chéile schools are characterised by –

".. Spiritual Development – To develop a relationship with God means being able to enter into the world of mystery. Students are introduced to this through areas such as nature, art, poetry and music. The spiritual dimension is developed through different experiences of prayer and ritual. Students may come to appreciate God as Creator of the universe and they also experience the mysterious oneness and inter-relatedness of creation".

In St. Mary's, Glasnevin, students are encouraged by the Principal, Deputy Principal, the Board of Management and the Teaching Staff to reflect on key spiritual issues throughout the academic school year. The Principal / Deputy Principal along with the Teaching Staff encourage the students, and the parents of the students as deemed appropriate, to participate in such ventures. Students participate in Faith Friends; Masses, e.g the Mass for the Opening of the Academic School Year; Religious Choirs; Visits to Communities of Faith, e.g the Holy Faith 'Mother House' in Glasnevin, Mosque, Synagogue; Retreats; Advent / Christmas Services; Ash Wednesday Reflections and the distribution of ashes to the School Community; Reconciliation Services; Remembrance Services; Reflections over the intercom; Graduation Mass and Meditations to mention but a few activities. Chaplaincy services are offered within the school and there is contact within the school to the Diocesan Advisors through visits, in-service and correspondence. Further discussion on these items are to be found in the Subject Department Plans.

There is often a cross-curricular approach taken by the Teachers within the school to the spiritual development of the students in St. Mary's and by extension, to the spiritual development of the whole school community of St. Mary's. Through these and other initiatives, the Principal, Deputy Principal and the Board of Management support the work of the spiritual development of the students and the whole school community in St. Mary's. Once again, the operation of this process is enhanced when each Staff member views her / his work within and outside the classroom as being interconnected with the work of every other Teacher in the overall task of delivering on the Mission Statement of the school.

Added to the above, there is a time allocation given for religious education from junior to senior levels. There is also an allocation of money given by the Principal and the Board of Management to provide for the opportunities as outlined above.

CONCLUSION –

Therefore, the special commitment given by the Principal, Deputy Principal, Board of Management and Teachers to the development of the moral and spiritual dimension of the school community of St. Mary's can be summarised as follows –

- The moral and spiritual development of the students, and by extension the moral and spiritual development of the whole school community, gives direction to the work carried out in St. Mary's
- The moral and spiritual development of the students, and by extension the moral and spiritual development of the whole school community, inspires the community of St. Mary's with a common purpose.
- The moral and spiritual development of the students, and by extension the moral and spiritual development of the whole school community, provides a framework from which policies and priorities can be derived.
- The moral and spiritual development of the students, and by extension the moral and spiritual development of the whole school community, establishes a reference point against which St. Mary's can evaluate the success of her activities.

MONITORING, REVIEW AND EVALUATION –

This policy document will be updated as necessary in the light of Staff feedback, Board of Management feedback, Department of Education and Skills changes and Le Chéile Trust changes.