

Loreto Abbey Secondary School
Dalkey, Co. Dublin.

LITERACY POLICY

“Loreto Abbey is a caring, Christian community in which pupils have the opportunity to achieve academic excellence and to grow spiritually, emotionally, socially, creatively and physically in a healthy environment.”

“To read is to fly; it is to soar to a point of vantage which gives a view over wide terrains of history, human variety, ideas, shared experience and the fruits of many inquiries.”

A.C. Grayling, Financial Times (in a review of A History of Reading by Alberto Manguel)

1. Rationale:

In July 2011, Minister for Education & Skills, Ruairi Quinn, launched The National Literacy and Numeracy Strategy, **Literacy and Numeracy for Learning and Life 2011-2020**. The aim of the strategy is to improve literacy and numeracy among young people in Ireland.

In conjunction with this strategy and DES Circular 0025/2012, we at Loreto Abbey Dalkey aim to ensure that we encourage a strong focus on literacy and numeracy skills, within a broad and balanced curriculum. We are committed to implementing a variety of literacy strategies which aim to improve the literacy standards of our students so they can engage competently with language, the printed text, broadcast media and digital media. This work is supported by the general parent body and the Parents’ Association.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the Whole School Inclusion Policy, Assessment Policy, Homework Policy and Internet Acceptable Use Policy.

2. Definition of Literacy:

Literacy includes the capacity to read, understand and critically appreciate various forms of communication including spoken language, printed text, broadcast media and digital media.

3. Responsibility for Literacy: A Whole School Approach

In order for it to be effective, the Literacy Policy must be adopted, enacted and promoted by all teachers in every subject area. The whole school approach to literacy includes the following elements:

- Literacy targets are included in all department subject plans.
- Student and staff emails are being used for the provision of information, notes and as a method of submitting work by the student.
- All spelling and/or grammar mistakes are to be corrected in all subject areas.
- All staff are supportive of the “A Book in Your Locker” initiative which promotes reading for 1st and 2nd years.
- A variety of teaching methodologies have been incorporated in order to differentiate teaching and learning and improve literacy levels. These methodologies include but are not limited to:
 - An emphasis on keywords

- The creation of a print-rich learning environment
- Use of ICT and iPads to promote Digital Literacy
- Adapted language within the classroom
- A number of individuals have a particular responsibility for literacy within the school. This group is responsible for monitoring the implementation of this policy and will assist teachers in the inclusion of literacy strategies in lessons.
 - English Department
 - Ms Kim Boland, SSE team member and Co-ordinator of literacy initiatives
- A number of individuals play an important part in the role of literacy in the school because of their involvement in extra-curricular initiatives.
 - Ms Kim Boland, Co-ordinator of the Creative Writing Club
 - Ms Rebekah Wade, Library Assistant and Co-ordinator of the Book Club
 - Ms Phoebe Igoe, Co-ordinator of the Drama Club

4. **Aims of School Literacy Policy**

This policy aims to improve literacy standards by encouraging cross curricular collaboration and promotes teaching that:

- Acknowledges all levels of abilities – differentiation
- Ensures all lessons have clear and specific outcomes
- Builds on prior knowledge
- Employs various methodologies and encourages activity based learning
- Reinforces learning through revision, discussion, testing and homework
- Integrates literacy strategies and techniques into subject planning

We also aim to promote learning that is:

- Relevant
- Active
- Independent
- Multi-sensory
- Reflective and evaluative

5. **Baseline Data:**

- Primary Schools forward a copy of the end of year report card, (including information from standardised tests in literacy of each student) to the secondary school in which the student has enrolled. The report includes the result obtained by the student in standardised literacy tests. The results of the CAT tests are used to inform the academic tracking document for first year which is forwarded to all staff.
- This data allows teachers to examine their student's literacy attainments/interests, set realistic and achievable targets and evaluate the success/failure rates of these targets.

6. **Learning Support Department:**

The Learning Support Department will identify students in need of support in literacy from the above tests or from Learning Assessments conducted by National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) or other qualified Educational Psychologists. Ms Roisin Conlon also seeks Learning Support referrals and this gives subject teachers the opportunity to put

forward students who they feel may need additional support in literacy. Appropriate literacy targets will be set in a student's Individual Educational Plan (IEP).

Teaching and learning support strategies will be put in place for such students during:

- One to one tuition
- Small group teaching classes
- In class support teaching
- SNA support

7. **Literacy Initiatives**

● **Literacy Noticeboard**

The literacy noticeboard is located outside room A5. It displays a celebration of reading which includes student art depicting many famous literary characters. There is also a novel recommendation for each year within the school. These recommendations are updated regularly and students are encouraged to consult the noticeboard for reading inspiration.

● **First Year CAT testing**

The CAT test is administered to all 1st years and is used to inform the academic tracking information which is forwarded to all staff. Teachers can use this information to inform the setting of individual student targets and to gain a better understanding of student ability in relation to literacy. It also allows the Learning Support Team to identify students that may need additional support with literacy.

● **School Library & Library Prefects**

- Ms Rebekah Wade is responsible for the maintenance of and promotion of the school library. She is present every Monday and her role includes ensuring that the books in the library are correctly organised and maintaining the print rich environment of our library.
- New novels are routinely ordered for the library and the librarian and library assistant are responsible for cataloguing these.
- The library assistant also takes responsibility for the 'Novel in Your Locker' programme.
- The school library is promoted through the dedicated library website (<https://loretoabbeydalkeylibrary.weebly.com>). This website is managed by Ms Kim Boland. The website contains information on services offered by the library, details the opening times and offers reading recommendations for junior, senior and international students. It also has a regularly updated blog section which keeps students up to date on all of the literacy news in the school.

● **A Novel in Your Locker**

- All students in 1st - 4th year are required to have a novel in their locker or on their iPad at all times. Students are asked to choose a novel which they are not reading for curricular purposes and are encouraged to borrow a book from the school library for this initiative. If they have a free class they are required to use that time to read their novel and are not permitted to complete their homework.

- **Reading Classes**

- All 1st year students have a forty minute dedicated library class every week. They are accompanied by their English teacher and work with the library assistant during this period.
- 2nd and 4th year students have a forty minute dedicated library class once a month. They are accompanied by their English teacher and work with the library assistant during this period.

- **2nd Year MS Readathon**

- All 2nd year students participate in the MS Readathon for the month of October. This initiative is led by the 2nd year English teachers. Students are encouraged to read as much as possible for four weeks and are asked to seek sponsorship for doing so. All of the money raised is donated to MS Ireland.
- To celebrate the completion of the MS Readathon 2nd years hold an event in the library each year. This is overseen by Rick O'Shea who is an advocate for reading and the patron of MS Ireland. Students dress up as their favourite literary character and prizes are awarded for the best costume. A number of students also read extracts from the books that they have enjoyed during the Readathon.

- **Creative Writing Club**

- The Creative Writing Club was established by Ms Kim Boland in September 2014 and currently has over fifty members. Membership is completely voluntary and those students who are involved range from 1st to 5th year.
- The club meets every week before school for between 8.15am and 8.45am in room A5. This time is used to practise writing in a wide variety of genres. Students are led in composing poetry, non-fiction, short stories, dialogue, etc.

- **Print Rich Environment**

- We wish to create a print-rich environment in our classrooms as well as our corridors. This will involve making full use of class noticeboards and also celebrating our students' work by displaying same around the school corridors.

- **Writer in Residence Scheme**

- We hosted a six week writer in residence scheme with Dave Rudden in 2017. We will endeavour to organise additional writer in residence schemes in future.

- **Author Visits**

- Our students have had the opportunity to attend talks and workshops with a variety of writers. We have made a significant effort to invite a variety of different writers into the school and have had the opportunity to work with authors, bloggers, journalists and poets. These visits are intended to promote both reading and writing amongst our students.
- To date, we have welcomed:
 - Louise O'Neill (author)
 - Paul Howard (author)
 - Joseph O'Connor (author)
 - John Connolly (author)

- Lorna Duffy (blogger)
- Rebecca Barker (Irish Sun news editor)
- Dave Rudden (author)
- Lisa Williamson (author)
- Sarah Webb (author)
- Sarah Maria Griffin (spoken word poet)
- Paul Muldoon (poet)
- Phil Lynch (poet)
- Liz Nugent (author)
- We will endeavour to continue this culture and organise such visits for our students in order to allow students to engage meaningfully with professionals who have careers related to literacy.
- **Drama Club**
 - The Drama Club is run by Ms Phoebe Igoe and meets each Monday after school in the Concert Hall.
- **Book Clubs**
 - The Book Club is run by Ms Rebekah Wade and meets monthly throughout the school year to discuss novels. All fourth years take part in a book club which is facilitated by their English teacher. Discussion around novels takes place regularly throughout the school year during their English classes.
- **Key Words**
 - Key words will be displayed in all classrooms. This will identify the most important terms to students and will facilitate their ability to learn and spell new words.

Elis Humphreys

Signed:

Chairperson

This policy will be reviewed in 2022/2023