



Loreto Abbey Secondary School, Dalkey

REPORT OF THE BOARD OF MANAGEMENT 2023/2024 ON THE WORKINGS OF THE SCHOOL

Our school 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.

Sections 20 and 21 of the Education Act 1988, the School Self Evaluation Guidelines and our ethos document "Continuing the Journey – a Loreto Education", all promote open and continuing communication between the Board of Management and the school community.

This report aims to synthesise the main developments during the school year and complements information contained in the Agreed Report following each meeting and now published on the website. The Board of Management took office on October 15th 2023 and its term expires in October 2026.

1. Members of the Board (15th October 2023 – October 2026)

Trustee nominees:	Dr. Eilis Humphreys (Chairperson) Ms Geraldine Bracken Ms Lorraine Dwyer Mr Jim Wade
Parent nominees:	Ms Mary Pat McAlarey Mr Conor Murray
Staff nominees:	Ms Aisling Green Ms Louise Segrave Daly
Secretary to the Board:	Mr. Robert Dunne (Principal)

2. Meetings of the Board 2022/2023

Ordinary meetings:

- 5th September 2023
- 12th October 2023
- 15th November 2023
- 9th January 2024
- 20th February 2024
- 19th March 2024
- 14th May 2024
- 18th June 2024

Special meetings:

- 23rd August 2023
 - 13th September 2023
 - 19th September 2023
 - 27th November 2023
 - 29th April 2024
 - 21st May 2024
- An Agenda is set by the Chairperson and Principal and is forwarded to each member of the Board.
 - All Board members are obliged to keep confidential, matters discussed at Board meetings unless otherwise agreed by the Board.
 - The Agreed Report of ordinary meetings of the Board is published on the Parents' Section of the website and is circulated to the staff and members of the Parents' Association.



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3. Enrolment/Staffing

- 732 students were enrolled in the 2023/2024 academic year.
- 40.98 academic staff and 3 Special Needs Assistants are funded by the Department of Education. 13 full-time academic staff, 8 part-time academic staff and an additional 41 support staff are employed by the Board of Management.
- Mr Will Flanagan was appointed as Acting Deputy Principal in September 2024. Mr Flanagan replaced Ms Marie Breen while she is on leave of absence.
- Ms Aisling Mooney was appointed to an Acting Assistant Principal 1 position and Mr Carl Thompson and Ms Cathy O'Dwyer to Acting Assistant Principal 2 positions in the first term. Ms Therese Ryan was appointed to an Assistant Principal 1 position and Ms Cathy O'Dwyer to an Assistant Principal 2 position with effect from September 1st 2024.

4. Strategic Plan

The Strategic Plan (2018-2023) focused on five key areas for development:

1. Characteristic Spirit
2. Learning and Teaching
3. Staff Development
4. Sustainable Operations
5. Working with Stakeholders

4.1a Characteristic Spirit

- Mr Patrick Byrne, Mr Donal O'Connor and Ms Jane Coyne attended the Loreto Network Day on Ethos during which different Loreto communities, including our school, shared how they were promoting and developing the Loreto ethos. Mr Byrne is also working on a network group exploring the possibility of developing a Loreto associates group.
- The Board continues to make resources available to support the holistic development of our students in the R.E. / Chaplaincy, Resource, SPHE and Guidance areas.
- The Justice and Peace Group coordinated by Ms Galligan organised a number of awareness and fundraising campaigns throughout the year.
- Mr Patrick Byrne coordinated the Ember/Solas Faith Leaders programme. This is a Diocesan initiative supported by the Loreto network and aims to develop student leaders in the area of faith and spirituality. Seventeen students were involved in the programme and assisted in a number of faith development initiatives throughout the year:
 - Assisting at our Open Evening
 - Supporting our Fourth Year students following their 'Sleep Out'
 - Production of a reflective video shown at our 'In November We Remember Service'
 - Completion of the Ministers of the Eucharist course
 - Organising of our 'Mary Ward' week – a week in which we reflect on the life of the foundress of the Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary
 - Made St. Brigid's crosses for distribution in Dalkey Parish
 - Attendance at an online Inter-Trust Prayer Service
 - Creation of a time of reflection for International Women's Day on March 8th
 - Organised the 'Fast from your Phone' initiative for First Years
 - Taught two lessons to the Confirmation Classes in Loreto Primary School
 - Attended two meetings with the CUS Ember group
 - Served as Ministers of the Eucharist at the Sixth Year Graduation Mass



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- Attended a graduation ceremony in DCU in May in which they were presented with Certificates in Faith Leadership by Archbishop Farrell.
- Four students joined Ms Scully and assisted pilgrims on the Dublin Diocesan Pilgrimage to Lourdes.
- Our Liturgical Programme continued this year. The Opening of the Year Mass was celebrated by Fr Declan Gallagher in Dalkey Parish Church on September 14th. Our Annual Mass for deceased members of the school community took place in November and we were joined by current and past members of staff, parents and students. Our Carol Service, on December 19th, was a beautiful celebration of the religious message of Christmas and our evening service was attended by a large number of families and friends of Loreto. Bishop Eamonn Walsh celebrated our Sixth Year Graduation Mass in Dalkey Parish Church on May 20th. Throughout the year, a number of optional thematic Liturgies took place at lunchtime in which social themes were explored through song, poetry and reflection.
- Mr Will Flanagan, Acting Deputy Principal, continues to lead the school in a moment of reflection every morning at 8:50am.
- Retreat experiences were offered to Sixth Year, Fourth Year, Second Year and First Year.
- The Green Schools Group assisted by our Green Champions and co-ordinated by Ms Scott and Mr Cullen continue to highlight Green issues for the school community. Together with Mr Oman, an Assistant Principal with responsibility for leading this area within the school, and with Ms Rebecca Scott and Mr David Cullen, they have focused on the importance of water, creating a biodiversity garden, developing a weather station and encouraging students to consider cycling to school.
- Thirty students walked the final 115km of the Camino in Spain in June. Our thanks to Ms Coyne and her dedicated team of staff who accompanied the group.
- Two groups of Fourth Years, supported by Ms Quinn, participated in the Young Social Innovators Competition.
- Various year groups organised fundraising initiatives this year. Our thanks too to the Ladies Lunch committee for this very generous donation to charities supported by the school

Loreto Rumbek	€33,800
Focus Ireland	€29,072
Cuala Immersion Project	€1,000
St Vincent de Paul (In-School Fundraising)	€1,655
St Vincent de Paul (Parish Leaflet Drop)	€39,000
Irish Hospice Foundation	€468

- Seventeen students participated in our exchange programme with Loreto Seville. We hosted their students in a reciprocal arrangement. We were delighted to welcome 40 students and staff from the Mary Ward Gymnasium in Bavaria on a study visit to Ireland.
- Students from Fifth Year participated in the Diocesan Emmanuel Concert in the Helix in DCU.
- A particular word of thanks to Ms. Coyne and her team of Fourth Years who organised a highly successful 'Spirt Day' in late May.

4.1B Guidance Department 2023/2024

Staffing

- Ms Dara Short and Ms Órla Brophy are full-time Guidance Counsellors. They are assisted by Ms Belinda Kelly, Child and Adolescent Psychotherapist, who works one day per week providing students with a professional counselling service.



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- Many staff working within the school complement the work of Ms Brophy and Ms Shortt – Year Heads, the Additional Educational Needs Department, Student Mentors and the Chaplaincy/R.E. Staff.

5th & 6th Year Career Guidance Meetings

All Sixth Year students had the opportunity to avail of one to one guidance meetings with Ms Shortt or Ms Brophy throughout the academic year. Each student would have had at least one mandatory meeting with a Guidance Counsellor and for anyone who chose to have additional meetings, these were scheduled accordingly.

The purpose of these meetings are:

- To support Sixth Year students to make informed decisions on their various options available to them following on from the Leaving Certificate.
- To support Sixth Year students in the areas of wellbeing and personal development (such as organisational skills, study skills, managing anxiety).
- Supporting Sixth Year students in their applications for RACE (Reasonable Accommodations for the State Examinations) and DARE (Disability Access Route to College).

The majority of our Fifth Year student body had one individual career guidance meeting, with many availing of follow up meetings to discuss their research progress. These took place between March and May 2024.

CAO Information Evening

A CAO Information Evening took place in October 2023 to advise Sixth Year parents and guardians on the options available to their daughters post Leaving Certificate.

RACE (Reasonable Accommodations at Certificate Examinations)

RACE Applications are processed collaboratively with the SEN Department each year.

A number of Junior and Leaving Certificate students will be availing of accommodations, ranging from spelling and grammar waivers, individual readers, assistive technology, to shared or even individual centres, to name but a few.

DARE Support

The **DARE** application consists of three parts which requires collaboration between many parties including Students, Teachers, Parents, Guidance Counsellor, Management and outside professional healthcare bodies. Students eligible for DARE met with their Guidance Counsellor to complete Section B of the Application.



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Senior & Junior Personal One-to-One Meetings

Our one to one personal guidance meetings are available to all students from First to Sixth Year. Students can request a one to one meeting with a Guidance Counsellor. They can also be referred through the Student Support Team or by their Year Head. In some cases, parents/ guardians will request a meeting for their daughter. This service was supported by our Chaplain, Sr Mary Delahunty and Child and Adolescent Psychotherapist, Belinda Kelly.

Formal Testing

Psychometric Testing takes place in collaboration with the Additional Educational Needs Department.

128, First Year students sat the **CAT4 Tests** online in September, 2023.

Testing in relation to academic screening, RACE and DARE is done using the **Woodcock Johnson IV, UK and Ireland Edition**. Students are identified through a variety of ways, for example through the AEN (Additional Educational Needs) Department, identified by Teachers, Management and the Guidance Counsellor.

Students from across all year groups have been assessed using the Woodcock Johnson IV for RACE, DARE, Irish Language Exemptions and other screening purposes throughout this academic year, September '23 to May'24.

Fourth Year students engaged with the online **Cambridge Profile Assessment** in November 2023. This assessment is designed to assist students in identifying the subject areas where they are most likely to perform well in and the careers that may be of interest to them based on these interests and strengths. A formal debriefing session took place in Killiney Castle, with renowned Guidance Counsellor, Brian Mooney talking parents and students through the assessment results.

Curricular Guidance (Career Guidance Classes / Guidance for Wellbeing)

First Year students: 10 week Guidance for Wellbeing module delivered to all classes

Fourth Year students: Career Guidance was delivered to all classes for the entire academic year.

Fifth Year students: 10 Career Guidance classes were delivered to all students between February and May

Sixth Year students - 10 Career Guidance classes were delivered from September to December

Visiting Speakers

This year as part of our Career Guidance Lunctime Talks, which took place from 1pm to 1.40pm in the Lecture Theatre, we had a range of guest speakers come to speak with our senior students.

We welcomed speakers from:

- **Dr Jennifer Keating from UCD School of History**



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- Valerie Abbott from Quinn School of Business
- Dr Orla Donoghue from UCD School of Science
- Emma Donovan from UCD School of Social Science
- Hannah Barton from IADT School of Psychology
- Therese Moylan from IADT School of Business
- Celine Hera from TUD School of Health Science
- Fiona Burke from DDLETB, who spoke to students about apprenticeships
- Paul McDonald, Chief Engineer with Kildare County Council
- Orla Colclough from the European Commission

Mr Tim Murnane, Managing Director of PUNCH Consulting Engineers, visited with some of his female colleagues, to speak with students from Third Year in October. Together the women show-cased careers with endless potential that combine knowledge and creativity to bring about positive changes in our world.

In October Erin Kennedy Camilleri, the Director of Recruitment at the University of Notre Dame, in the USA, came to speak with TY students about what life is like at the University. The University of Notre Dame is the top-ranked Catholic university in the US.

We had a visit from two Representatives from Scottish Universities to encourage students to consider alternative options within Scotland.

On Tuesday, 30th April, we hosted our annual **Career and College Exhibition in the Concert Hall**. We were joined by 13 exhibitors, which included representatives from Institutes of Further Education, Universities and Colleges including Maynooth, UG, TUD, UCD, Ulster University, and also two representatives from the National Ambulance Service.

This exhibition was attended by students from Fourth, Fifth and Sixth Year; it took place from 9am to 12.30pm. It proved to be a very successful day with both exhibitors and students delivering very positive feedback on the experience.

Trips

Fifth and Sixth Year students attended **Higher Options** in the RDS over two consecutive days in September.

TY students attended the **World Skills Exhibition** in the RDS in September.

In November, a group of Fifth and Sixth Year students had the opportunity to visit **Black Hall Place** where they were guided around this wonderful historic building, while Ian Ryan explained to students the process of becoming a Solicitor.

Policy Review

In February, the Whole School Guidance Plan and the Confidentiality Policy were passed by the Board of Management.

Due to more recent Circular updates the WSG Plan and the Psychometric Testing Policy were updated. They are now ready to go to the Board of Management for approval.



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Evaluation of the Guidance Service

Evaluation of the Career Guidance and the Guidance Service in general, was addressed through a workshop with a group of Sixth Year students in December 2023. Two similar workshops were conducted with parents in April 2024. Findings from these meetings will be implemented during the next academic year, 2024/25.

4.2 Learning and Teaching

- The Teaching and Learning Committee met five times during the academic year and led the school Self-Evaluation process using the evaluative cycle. We are now engaged in the third cycle (September 2022 – June 2026) and, as a result of an analysis of surveys, we are focusing on the following areas within all groups:
 1. Key Skills
 2. Digital Learning
 3. Assessment
 4. Wellbeing
- Having availed of an advisory visit from the Department Inspector with responsibility for School Self-Evaluation, we designed a Venn diagram in order to encapsulate our vision for staff, which is that the four elements of our SSE combine to enable teaching and learning to flourish in our classrooms.
- There have been a number of positive outcomes arising from this year's SSE targets including:
 - 1) Our Attendance Campaign, 'Attend Today, Achieve Tomorrow' has led to a marked improvement in full and partial day absenteeism, We will be focusing on punctuality more specifically moving into 2024/25.
 - 2) Junior students are more familiar with our Student Support system.
 - 3) The Key Skills are more visible in our classrooms and via the student journal; students are more familiar with the terminology and their practical application in teaching and learning.
 - 4) In line with this, we are customising the school journal and it has been designed in keeping with our SSE targets including Student Support, a Digital Passport, our Attendance Campaign and the Key Skills.
 - 5) Our school journal is also synced with a student Google Site which will enable us to provide our students with live updates regarding our four areas of focus but also all aspects of school life.
- 13 students received Entrance Scholarships to UCD and 2 to Trinity based on their Leaving Certificate results.
- We hosted two visits from two groups of international educators – one from Malta and another from Italy.
- 3 Fourth Year students joined Ms Eve Murray at the "Europe Without Borders" Conference in the University of Trento, Italy for an international seminar.
- The First Years engaged in 'The Big Dig', an archaeological workshop organised by the History department in conjunction with The School of Archaeology.



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- Thematic weeks celebrating Science, Irish and Reading took place during the year.
- A group of Sixth Years were interviewed on letter writing on RTE Nationwide on February 14th. Second Years are now involved in the Accelerated Reading programme which aims to encourage an interest in reading.
- A group of Sixth Year Physics students mentored by Mr Cullen won the Eirgrid Cleaner Climate Grand Award 2023 at the Scifest National Final and the LEGO Club continues to win awards in the DCU Robotic Competition.
- The SPHE Support Group organised a number of events promoting Wellbeing and co-ordinated our 'Stand-Up Awareness Week' from November 6th – 10th.

4.3 Staff Development

- A final Junior Cycle Whole School Planning and School Self Evaluation Seminar for staff took place on January 22nd 2024. This was a valuable opportunity to engage in cross-curricular collaboration and to exchange expertise.
- Many teachers continue to engage with the Apple teacher programme. Mr Eoin Hughes achieved Apple Coach accreditation.
- All teachers are using the ten discretionary hours available as part of the Croke Park agreement for upskilling in their subject area.

4.4 Sustainable Operations

- Financial Management is addressed at every Board of Management meeting. The Board is guided in its deliberations by a Finance Sub-Committee chaired by Mr. Jim Wade. Ms Sheila McWilliams, Ms Sarah Collis and Mr Robert Dunne are members of this group.
- Loreto Abbey is a registered charity and end-of-year accounts are audited and submitted to the Loreto Education Trust and to the Financial Services Unit of the Department. The accounts for 2022/2023 were approved on 9/1/2024.
- During the academic year, a number of infrastructural improvements took place:
 - Remedial work was completed on the granite boundary wall. This was part-financed by a grant from the Department of Heritage.
 - The Sports Hall foyer floor and three classrooms were revarnished.
 - Four classrooms, two corridors and the Board Room were painted.
 - The library was reconfigured and Learning Pods were installed there and in E1.
 - A new student social area was created on the C Corridor.
 - The Biodiversity Garden was completed.
 - The Biology and Physics Labs were refitted.

4.5 Working with Stakeholders

Parents' Association

- The Parents' Association receives an annual grant of €5,000 from the Board of Management for their important work and has met monthly during the academic year.
- The Board furnishes an Agreed Report to parents which is published on the Parents' Section of our website following the Board Meeting.



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- The Executive organised very successful coffee mornings/ social evenings for parents of each year group during the year. A seminar presented by Dr Richard Hogan on Anxiety and the Adolescent on January 31st was well attended.

Past Pupils

- We hosted two Past Pupils reunions for the Class of 2013 and the Class of 1971. A large number of past pupils from all years joined our current mums at the Loreto Dinner held in the Royal Marine Hotel in Dun Laoghaire in April.
- Dr Maeve O'Rourke and Ms Orla O'Donnell, both past pupils, spoke to Senior Cycle students about their career paths.
- The Board facilitated the Annual General Meeting of the national Loreto Past Pupils Union in May.

Community

- The Board continues to implement its policy of offering the school and grounds for community use. We, whenever possible, support local businesses and community groups such as Dalkey Community Council, Dalkey Parish and the St Vincent de Paul.
- The Sports Hall is currently rented by 13 groups.

5.0 Child Protection / Anti Bullying

- The annual reviews of our Child Safety Statement and Risk Assessment and of our Anti-Bullying Policy were undertaken on September 5th 2023. Notifications were forwarded to the stakeholders that the reviews had taken place.
- Mr. Dunne is the designated Liaison Person and Ms Gráinne Byrne is the Deputy Designated Liaison Person.
- All staff have completed the Tusla and PDST online training.
- The Child Protection Oversight Report is presented to the Board at every meeting where appropriate.

6.0 Policies

- **The following new policies were approved:**

- Protected Disclosures Policy (March 19th 2024)
- Data Protection Policy (March 19th 2024)
- Dress Code for Food Workers (May 14th 2024)

- **The following policies were amended:**

- Statement of Strategy for School Attendance (April 15th 2024)
- Dignity in the Workplace Policy for Staff (January 9th 2024)
- Whole School Guidance Plan and Confidentiality Policy (February 20th 2024)
- Religious Education Policy (February 20th 2024)
- Homework Policy (March 19th 2024)
- Maternity Leave for Privately-Paid Teachers (March 19th 2024)
- Assessment Policy (May 14th 2024)
- Amendments to the Code of Behaviour (May 14th 2024)



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7.0 Co-Curricular / Extra Curricular Provision

- There continues to be a large number of students of all skill sets involved in a range of sporting activities, including Hockey, Basketball, Gaelic Football, Soccer, Rugby, Athletics and Tennis. Swimming, Horse-Riding and Golf are also supported.
- Our co-curricular Music programme is developing with increasing numbers of students taking tuition in a variety of musical instruments. Our school choir sang at the Feis Ceol competition, the National Conference for Relatives of those Missing held in Croke Park, a Novena of Grace Mass and a number of in-house concerts and events.
- Our Transition Years performed in 'Footloose' in the Mermaid Theatre in Bray and our Second and Fourth Years joined the boys from Blackrock College in the staging of 'The Great Blackrock Bank Robbery'.
- A wider range of clubs is now on offer at lunchtime, including Knitting, Chess, History and Homework Club. A Chess master tutors the Chess group twice weekly and we entered a number of inter-school competitions this year.
- A large number of Junior Cycle students participated in the YES Competition with 13 students reaching the Regional Final and 2 reaching the National Final.
- 40 TY students received their Gaisce Bronze Awards having completed the four challenges required during their Transition Year.
- Junior Cycle Hockey students enjoyed a weekend trip to Sligo while Senior Hockey students visited Glasgow. A number of 6th Years spent three days in Lourdes, the 4th years toured the Lake Garda area in Italy and the 5th Years had an opportunity to walk the Camino.

7.1 Conclusion

The Board expresses its appreciation to the staff for their continued dedication to our students, to our students for their enthusiasm and involvement in school life and to our parents for their support for Loreto Abbey over the past year.

Robert Dunne,
Secretary, Board of Management

June 2024