

## **Loreto Schools.**

Our unique characteristic spirit derives from the vision and spirituality of Mary Ward who founded the Loreto Order (Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary) over 400 years ago. She wished to pioneer a new role for women in the church and society. At a time when the education of girls was not considered important, Mary Ward set about founding schools for girls. She saw this as the most important means of realising her vision that: “women, in time to come, will do much”. Since then, and through centuries of committed service by countless Loreto Sisters, the order has specialised in the provision of education and is renowned worldwide for innovation in their field of expertise. In the past few decades in particular, the challenge of maintaining the highest standards in terms of the educational experience for our students has been taken up by lay teachers and management who remain committed to Loreto values and the maintenance of the famous Loreto spirit and sense of community.

Our students can avail of many opportunities to connect with other Loreto students across the country by attending Loreto sports competitions, debates, Student Council and Development Education conferences. The Loreto identity is strong and as we say ‘once a Loreto girl, always a Loreto girl’!

## **Our Ethos**

As a Catholic school founded in faith, we see the spiritual development of our students as being an essential component of our mission. Gospel values underpin all areas of school life and provide a moral context for all learning.

In the context of a respect for cultural and religious diversity, the Catholic liturgical year provides regular spiritual landmarks for our students as we mark feast days and seasons with prayer services, displays and school Masses. Students take an active role by participating in and preparing these liturgies.

Our educational philosophy is derived from the life and mission of Mary Ward and her pioneering approach to education. This philosophy is underpinned by Gospel values and her radical vision for her times. She worked for the fulfilment of her vision that: ‘women in times to come will do much’ through her ministry of education.

Loreto welcomes students from all cultural and faith backgrounds and we are proud of the diversity that exists in our school. In this regard, our aim is for the well-being and development of all students in our care.

Our educational philosophy is described in three key documents:

- Continuing the Journey – A Loreto Education
- Loreto Education (Kolkata) Guidelines
- Mary Ward Compass

These documents can be accessed by clicking this link: [link to key Loreto documents](#)

They guide and shape how we lead, teach and learn in a Loreto school. They outline our vision and our aspirations for our students. For example, in ‘Continuing the Journey’, it is stated: during her time here, a Loreto student learns to assimilate:

- a sense of personal value
- a sense of personal destiny

- a sense of place in the historical context and scheme of things
- a generous sense of responsibility towards others
- a sense of the innate dignity of every human being created in God's image

### **History of Loreto Fermoy**

On this the 170th anniversary of Loreto in Fermoy it is interesting to cast an eye back on the history of the order and in particular the history of Loreto here in Fermoy.

The story of Loreto Schools began in 1609 when Mary Ward founded the first schools. Mary Ward was a remarkable woman who pioneered the higher education of young women, and established schools all over Europe at a time when women were denied access to education. From humble beginnings the Loreto mission grew and now has schools all over the world.

In 1822 the first house of the Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Ireland was opened and named the Loreto house after the shrine in Italy where Mary Ward used to pray.

In the year of 1853, Bishop Murphy of Cloyne dioceses invited the Loreto sisters from Rathfarnham, Dublin to open a school for the education of young girls in Fermoy. Immediately the Rathfarnham superior gave her consent and on October 17, 1853 she, accompanied by Mother Eucharia Dease and two other nuns set out by train from Kingsbridge station. The train only came to Mallow so from there to Fermoy the nuns travelled by car, probably on of Bianconi's famous long cars.

On reaching the convent, the nuns found an empty house cold and unfurnished with white washed walls. One room had furniture but that was on loan. It was a wet stormy day when the Galtee mountains were covered in mist and the Blackwater was swollen and dark. Rain poured in under doors and windows. Water was even running down the walls - "Weeping for joy" as one priest remarked.

The Presentation nuns helped in every way giving mattresses etc. Having spent a week in Fermoy, the Rathfarnham Superior bade farewell to the three nuns, and on leaving gave them the sum of half a guinea as sole capital on which to proceed. She also gave them some cold meat for a week's provision. The bishop gave them ten bedsteads, a few barrels of potatoes and a little coal.

The school opened on November 2, the Feast of All Souls, the year the river swelled to such a height, the flood caused dreadful destruction in the town. The nuns toiled under difficult conditions to build a school from these humble origins. Later that year, a Mrs. O'Gorman gave them a sum of £70, plus £2 for the purchase of a statue of Our Lady for their oratory. She also gave them other gifts for Christmas eve and for their Christmas dinner.

By the end of January 1854, the boarding school was opened with four pupils in it and the nuns found that it was not always raining in Fermoy and when the sun shone they looked down the valley of the Blackwater, on a landscape of heart-lifting loveliness.

The nuns struggled through many challenges establishing their new school. The Winter of 1855 was particularly inclement. Cholera prevailed in Fermoy. The nuns prayed to Our Lady to preserve the pupils from the scourge.

Mother Eucharia Dease proved an out-standing foundress. She lived to see the Fermoy Convent develop to substantial network of buildings with a fine reputation in the educational world and a leading light in the education of young women in Ireland. She died on May 24, 1878. She was laid to

rest in the little cemetery on the grounds and the community sadly mourned the loss of a great mother and foundress.

Over the years, extensions were added to the original building. In 1967 the Secondary School became part of the Free Education Scheme. On 13th August 1969 the Department of Education's scheme for the rationalisation of the girls' secondary schools in the town was implemented and Loreto Secondary School became the Voluntary Secondary School for girls in the area. As a result of this, pupil enrolment increased and so a thirty seven room extension was opened in 1980. The boarding school closed in 1993 but other buildings have been added and future renovations are planned to keep the spirit of the original founders alive.

The school has seen many changes throughout the years but has remained a focal point for education in the town. It is one of eighteen Loreto Secondary Schools in Ireland. All Loreto schools share the common educational philosophy of their foundress Mary Ward and maintain links through inter-school co-operation and conferences of personnel from each school.

"Work with great tranquillity, joy and magnanimity, for what is not done in one year can be done in another" - Mary Ward