



Institute of The Blessed Virgin Mary
Australia and South East Asia Province

LORETO EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY





“Our greatness and strength consist...in this – that we have free and open access to God, from whom all greatness and strength come.”¹

The Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary was founded at the beginning of the 17th century by an Englishwoman, Mary Ward, to serve the Catholic community through the care and development of the faith through education and various social ministries in keeping with the context of the times.

The goals of a contemporary Loreto education reflect Mary Ward's vision:

- To nurture the spiritual, intellectual and social development of the individual;
- To develop each student's awareness of and response to others to prepare them to take their place as active global citizens;
- To invite students to a deeper awareness of God's love.

The Christian person, as envisaged by Mary Ward, is characterised by:

- freedom
- justice
- sincerity
- verity
- felicity

These ideals, incorporating personal responsibility, responsiveness to God and others, and the search for truth, epitomise the yearnings of all peoples in every age. Being fundamental human values, they are particularly relevant in today's world where the dignity of the human person is threatened.

In contemporary society, characterised by rapid change and uncertainty, among the most important issues to be raised are issues of values, and the translation of these values into action. A Loreto school “promotes not only the traditional values in which it is grounded but also those values needed for education that is responsive and relevant to the present reality and to the future”.²

Loreto schools aim to meet the spiritual, intellectual, and social needs of each student, developing more fully the ability of each student to think and act objectively and responsibly, to value the search for truth, and to appreciate the dignity and value of the human person.

Cover Image: Students at Loreto Normanhurst, New South Wales

1 Adapted from Poyntz, M. & Wigmore, W. A briefe relation of the holy life & happy death of our dearest mother, of blessed memory, Mrs. Mary Ward.

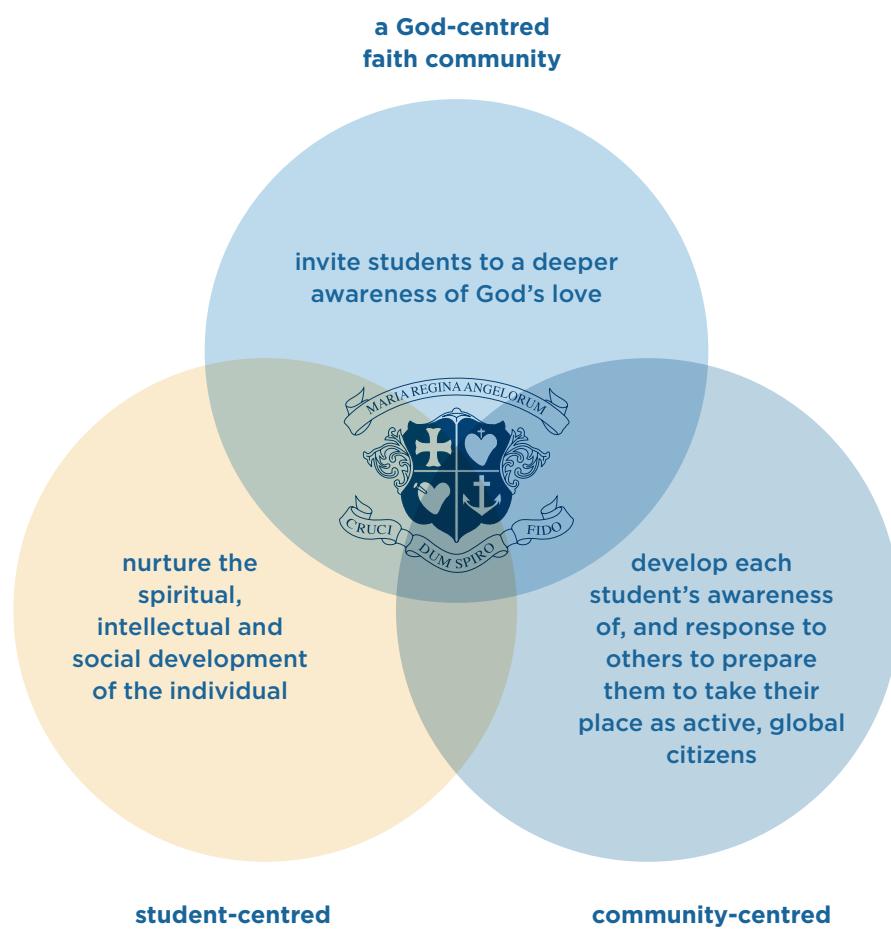
2 [A Mary Ward Schools' Compass](#)

Integration of Mission and Values

The goals of a Loreto education are threefold. These goals are both independent of and interdependent on each other.

The valued emphases and objectives can be considered under the following headings:

- The Loreto school as student-centred
- The Loreto school as community-centred
- The Loreto school as a God-centred faith community





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The Loreto school as student-centred

A Loreto school:

- promotes well-being as wholeness of body, mind and spirit;
- celebrates the growth and achievement of each student;
- promotes the development of the individual through a wide and varied curriculum encompassed by an atmosphere of encouragement, recognition and inclusivity;
- encourages a love of learning and a striving for excellence, with recognition of the need for self-discipline and effort;
- promotes in each student a sense of worth, dignity and self-acceptance;
- promotes relationships based on compassion, courage, empathy, honesty, justice, respect, and sincerity;
- provides students with a framework of discernment to support responsible and personal decisions made through genuine conviction and internalised values;
- promotes a respect for truth:
 - **intellectual truth** through the development of logical reasoning and critical judgement;
 - **moral truth** as a search for a commitment to the ‘common good’ and involving a recognition that, amid changing values and relative standards, there are still “absolute” ideals which people strive to uphold;
- demonstrates a concern for the emotional and social development of each student, involving an awareness of the importance of interpersonal communication skills;
- empowers students to seek truth, and to question, critique and act on the prevailing cultural, political and philosophical ideas within their world.
- encourages an environment where students are empowered to develop confidence, critical and creative thinking, determination, perseverance, and self-efficacy; and
- promotes the development of the aesthetic sense, sensitivity, and imagination.

The Loreto school as community-centred

A Loreto school:

- promotes a Christian world-view and global understanding as a basis for living;
- teaches respect for the various religious traditions of the world;
- espouses justice as a fundamental value, leading to an acceptance of individual and corporate responsibility for the local and wider community;
- promotes an understanding of the importance of family and an appreciation that loving fidelity and commitment can provide the basis for the expression of these values in the context of one’s life;
- offers leadership opportunities which enable students to develop an understanding of leadership in the Ignatian tradition;
- prepares students for life in a rapidly changing world without losing one’s self-identity; furthering an understanding of roles within families and society, and fostering equal opportunity in education;

- encourages students to value and protect the natural environment through an awareness of environmental issues and sustainability;
- promotes, in the spirit of Mary Ward, an understanding of the changing role of women in society with a view to advocating for positive and ethical approaches to this role in the future;
- promotes the development of a sense of social responsibility and respect for others in all aspects of school life;
- encourages active participation in social justice programs, especially IBVM global and regional priorities;
- provides guidance for students, through career education, to choose a vocation which is not only self-fulfilling but, more importantly, self-giving and self-transcending; and
- promotes the appreciation and transmission of the tradition of language and culture.

The Loreto school as a God-centred faith community

A Loreto school:

- promotes education in faith through catechesis;
- invites students to an awareness of God's love, care and compassion, so that they will find meaning in life and hope for the future;
- nurtures an inclusive Catholic community where all can achieve growth through love, trust, responsible freedom and mutual respect;
- offers a religious education program which emphasises scripture, spirituality and theology;
- encourages all community members to appreciate and use their God-given gifts insofar as they help us develop as loving persons;
- provides opportunities to experience the Catholic faith as a living and meaningful reality.
- fosters an appreciation of, and involvement in, the liturgical life of the Catholic Church;
- provides opportunities for reflection and discernment, especially via the use of the Examen and other Ignatian reflective practices;
- empowers students to be advocates and change agents who actively pursue opportunities for greater involvement in decision-making and leadership roles within the Catholic Church; and
- develops students' realisation of their place within the Church today and in the future, and of the contribution they can make to the life of the Church in their homes and in the wider community.

Conclusion

The integration of Catholic education into the whole pattern of life will enable students to find God as the source and goal of their true humanity, the one in whom they "live and move and have their being".³

Students are empowered to grow towards responsible self-direction so that they may contribute to the good of society, of which they are members, and in whose responsibilities as adults they will share. Loreto schools are challenged "to generate an environment where Gospel values are appreciated, lived and imparted"⁴ and to provide an education which encourages growth towards wholeness and the building of a just world.

A Mary Ward school today affirms the centrality of the person of Jesus. His gospel and our particular charism offer to education a profound way of being, acting as a positive force for transformation of lives.

Building on the foundation of our God-given charism, we seek to invest in the holistic growth of our school community in a deeper understanding and living of the gospel.⁵

³ [Acts 17:28](#)

⁴ Loreto Schools of Australia Mission Statement

⁵ [A Mary Ward Schools' Compass](#)

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