

## LORETO HIGH SCHOOL, CHORLTON

### Mary Ward Review

6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> November 2017

Sister Bernadette Turtle IBVM and Mrs Jane Beever carried out the Mary Ward review at Loreto High School Chorlton. We enjoyed our two- day visit and it marked a special anniversary, coming just after the 10 year celebrations the previous term of the School joining the Loreto family and network.

From the minute you walk into the School the values are visible and the quality of this visual celebration of Mary Ward is impressive. As the two days unfolded we witnessed expressions of the values lived out, through welcome, inclusion and understanding.

The visit began with our introduction at the staff briefing, a quiet calming start to the day was framed with a simple yet profound prayer from the Chaplain. During the two days we met individuals and groups from within the community including: Middle leaders, the RE department, parents, student leaders, the Student Council, Eco – Warriors, Lay Chaplain, Governors, the Leadership Team. The School was celebrating the fantastic news that the Student Council had just been named the Manchester School Council of the Year and were justifiably proud of the award

The leadership group cherish the fact that the School is widely known as a family and recognise challenges within the community –They relish and celebrate the fantastic diversity of staff and students. They are unapologetic about the Values. Whilst they are proud of separate responsibilities the sincerity and trust within the team is clear and their shared journey has deepened this. They have confidence in Middle leaders and seek a “no barriers” approach to achieving excellence. Students are known and the academic challenges that the School faces are being addressed in a variety of ways from high expectations to resilience building to the weekly Teaching and learning QA procedures and processes. The work of the two newest members to the team was warmly acknowledged. With the Head they are dynamic in their approaches to face the broader pressures and challenges for young people and their families and inclusive in outlook. Practical expression of such challenges have included Curriculum support and revision evenings to engage parents.

The value and necessary impact of the Teaching for living and Learning programme on the School is such that the ... colleague newly involved in the delivery of the TfLL programme has been seconded to the Leadership team. She has received very positive feedback from staff in relation to the programme and explained that it puts everything into the perspective of “why we are here”. She was clear about the future development of the programme and keen that its relevance as a whole School programme should be part of the school CPD training programmes.

Middle leadership share the same commitment as the leadership team to the whole child and acknowledged the importance of their leading by example “this is how our family operates - we know our shared and mission. Everyone wants the same things – it’s about the children. The Leadership team is recognised for its support and for the opportunities that are given.

We met an impressive student leadership group who gave us a guided tour of their school. Their pride in, and the appreciation of their community was very strong. They had a clear sense of justice and inclusion and spoke with gracious eloquence about their experiences and their understanding. Their respectful and thoughtful approach set the bar high for the other groups we were to meet - they did not disappoint.

It was a delight to meet with the Eco Warriors a less vocal group of students who undramatically have taken to improving the environment of the school. They know why they do the work they do and why

it is important for the school and for the planet, and they are keen to draw more people into the group. An opportunity for leadership is taken up by some who I think may not otherwise come forward. It is good that this unglamorous work gets attention and encouragement from Leadership and that the head girl is a member of the group.

The School Council, were buzzing, fresh from their success as Manchester's top student council body. They spoke ably of their work and warmly of their appreciation of each other's gifts and strengths. They are a very dynamic group, with some students joining for certain campaigns and others committing to a more regular structure. Whatever the approach, all are included with the most recent successes include diversity day, International Women's day with a planned men's day in the pipeline. The work of the PSHCE coordinator in supporting the group has been key and her joy at their flourishing evident.

The social impact of the school was so evident in the work carried out in the "Boys to men" programme, an innovative programme held in the Manchester United Hub Office with the purpose of helping boys address emotional and social needs for many, in the absence of strong male role models at home. The enthusiasm of those leading the project is vital to its evident success.

School Governors believe that teachers practice what they preach. The Head believes in the School and she wears her Loreto heart on her sleeve. They recognise the vital impact of Loreto on the School know that the School is a lot better for the association and the input. They want a School alive and responsive to the realities of society's complex needs. The Chair talked passionately about the humbling and inspiring 10 year journey the School had been on and affirmed how vital the Values are to the health of Loreto Chorlton.

From our conversations, there was a recognition of the need for consistency with behaviour based on information gleaned from staff surveys and this was felt to be a justice issue that the School was addressing.

The Safeguarding Team has proved to be an effective strategic thinking team comprising key members of School community; each carrying out a vital role to ensure that the most vulnerable and their families remain a focus for the School. The team comprises a parent support advisor, PSHCE Co-ordinator, DSL and other relevant staff. Their work is a clear expression of the Values in action.

The hard working and dedicated Head of RE and team, are very clear about the place of faith education in the school and of Mary Ward and the Values. All the children are introduced to the life and work of Mary Ward in Year 7, and this is a foundation for the development of an understanding of the Mary Ward values through curriculum/assemblies/marketing/and artwork throughout the school and until they leave. It was uplifting to see newly-inscribed quotations of Mary Ward above doorways. Although they are at the centre of the school in this respect they do not claim credit for the evident spiritual atmosphere of the school but generously acknowledge the contribution of other staff members to the spiritual life of the school and speak very positively of the support, enthusiasm and example of the Leadership team.

From our conversation it was evident that, in view of the new linear exams, there is great concern that the students are given the best opportunity for success in their examinations, and the Head of RE and others are attending meetings to clarify points of difficulty regarding the 'new' exam format.

The RE staff work well with other departments giving support as needed, and they recognise the importance of the Chaplain in the school. Though the recently-retired chaplain and the newly-appointed chaplain are quite different in personality the RE department speaks highly of both and has

created a strong working relationship with the present chaplain who has already made an impact on both staff and students and is very keen to be involved in the building up of the Loreto ethos.

They understand the importance of the core values being lived out not just being known, and are have worked hard with their colleagues to help embed the values.

The quiet gentleness of the presence of the new Lay Chaplain and his wonderful welcome has been appreciated. The Chaplaincy Rom was described by one as a “spa of spirituality” and valued as such. It is open to all at key times in the day a sacred spot for all. There are 10 pupil Chaplains and an active Justice & Peace Group. The Lay Chaplain sees his role as building relationships an opportunities and at the recent Year 7 welcome Mass, thanks to his perseverance, the number of parents in attendance wonderfully exceeded all expectations at 40. He is inclusive in outlook and firmly rooted in Ignatian spirituality.

Sister Bernadette had lunch with a small group of parents who wanted to express their appreciation of the fact that the School is sensitive to their needs as well as the students.

It was very clear from our many conversations with the Head, staff and students that the Mary Ward heritage is greatly valued. In all the staff we met sensed a real love and caring attitude towards the children, particularly the most vulnerable ones. This is a community that is accepting of diversity and differences and encourages the freedom to “be yourself”.

#### **Next Steps:**

Continue to embed the values in the day to day expression of the School and ensure that the TfLL programme reaches all staff

It good to know that there is a determination to make the Hub a more suitable venue for the children who need to be out of class for a period of time. This would contribute to the well-being of the school as a whole.