



LEEN Visit to Loreto High School Chorlton



24th & 25th June 2025

Preamble

Jane Beever, Loreto Education Officer, and Michael Jaffrain, Principal of Loreto College Manchester visited Loreto High School Chorlton on 24th and 25th June 2025. During the two days, they met with the Headteacher, Governors, members of the Senior Leadership Team, SEND and attendance teams, the Director of Personal development, the Religious Studies department, the school chaplain and students. There were also meetings with a range of teachers, support staff, parents and staff involved in the York induction programme, the Teaching for Learning & Living (TfLL) programme and those with responsibility for Extracurricular activities and staff wellbeing. There were also formal and informal meetings with students, the student council, student chaplains, and a range of pupils from across Key Stages 3 and 4.

At the start of the first day, we joined the breakfast club where a large group of students and some staff were having the free breakfast offered daily. There was an air of calm in the dining room and a sense of a very valued and purposeful start to the school day. This club was started out of a clear need to provide the first meal of the day for students, and it is making a difference to the young people who use it. During our visit there were approximately 70 young people made use of breakfast club. During the two-day visit we also had the opportunity to observe the carefully named *formation* time across different year groups where the focus was on preparation for the day and the Gospel for the week. We joined lessons to have a flavour of the learning culture and visited the joyous poetry competition hosted for partner primary schools by Loreto Chorlton. During our visit, Year 10 were on practice examinations. We witnessed a very thorough process, one rooted in the routine of prayer. Each examination began with the Sign of the Cross and a short prayer finishing with “Our Lady of Loreto – Pray for us”. Students were reminded of Loreto School’s aspirations and that all staff want what is best for their future. Staff made every effort to reassure pupils about the impending exams, and “care” was a key word used regularly.

A guided tour lead by three fantastic ambassadors from Year 8 for Loreto was a wonderful experience. The confidence, maturity and understanding which the young leaders spoke about their school and the Loreto values was a joy.

Context

Loreto High School Chorlton serves a very diverse socio-economic community, ranging from quite affluent suburbs of Manchester with a high proportion of aspirational, professional families to areas associated with high levels of poverty and deprivation such as Hulme and Moss Side. The school endeavours to instil in its young people ‘a Christ-like respect and compassion’ for themselves and for others and is vigilant to their specific needs and signposts early help interventions where possible. This includes close working relationships with the Manchester Safeguarding Hubs and local police officers. The school is in the top 20% of all schools nationally for the proportion of children on Free School Meals. It has 54% of the school on FSM compared with the national figure of 25.7%. The school is also in the highest quintile for mobility and SEN. The school is in the highest quintile for minority ethnicity. It currently has 21 different minority ethnicities logged in SIMS. This diversity is a real strength,

and the relatively small size of the school helps it to celebrate it and ensure the school community is fully integrated and cohesive. 36% of the students are baptised Catholics. This marks a decline from 51.5% five years' ago. The remainder are 24.3% other Christian denominations, 17.5% Muslim, 6.3% practising Muslims, 7.7% Islam, 0.9% Hindu, 0.1% Sikh, 0.5% other, 1.2% Orthodox, 0.1% Buddhist, 2.5% refused and 9.5% no stated religion. 49% come from partner primary schools. 33% of the staff are Catholic

The school has many extremely vulnerable students including 8 Local Authority Looked After Children, children who are subject to Special Guardianship Orders authorised by the courts and other children who live in private fostering arrangements with other family members. Two children are at Children's Services' highest level of intervention with Child Protection Plans and 8 children are at Child in Need status. 15 referrals have been made directly to Children's Services in the past year and in total 40 children have had some contact with a Social Worker.

Loreto Chorlton – a place of accompaniment

There is a genuine understanding of Ignatian accompaniment across all aspects of this school community. Governors, staff and students expressed this in many and varied ways. Students across the community bore testament to this approach and as a result there is a sense of family that permeates this community. The Director of Personal development has created a thorough, rich and engaging values led curriculum. The foundations for this are set on Values day in Year 7 and are built upon in the ensuing years. All students we met could speak with confidence of this sense of belonging and of the specific roots of Loreto. In one student meeting a year 8 Nurture group spoke with great conviction of the Mary Ward story and its impact.

Loreto Chorlton is a truly inclusive school. The recent link building is a shining example of this. A place where complex needs are met and understood and the individual supported to be their best. Attention to detail to the needs of young people and their families is a hallmark of the care *provided by* the safeguarding, attendance and welfare teams. This care has gone beyond and has resulted in a Loreto foodbank, Loreto wardrobe and the purchase of food vouchers for vulnerable families, generously supported by all staff. At the heads of department briefing, it was clear that there was a shared belief in the supportive and inclusive nature of the school, particularly the need to look after the most vulnerable children. Their focus on ensuring that the new teaching and learning handbook was ready for the new academic year supported this desire.

Students themselves said that Mary Ward would have approved of the inclusive opportunities at Loreto Chorlton, aiming to give everyone the best possible start in life. Students are encouraged and supported to accompany each other at Loreto Chorlton. Student leadership is a jewel in the school's crown. The head girl and boy and prefects spoke eloquently about their responsibilities and the impact they felt they had on the school. Initiatives included setting up a science club for Key Stage 3 pupils, organising a masterclass for Year 5 students, offering homework support, running the "Word of the Week" to develop vocabulary, and supporting drama students with confidence building. One student shared, "I wasn't always the best-behaved student, but the Head trusted me and made me a prefect – I feel I'm a better person now." Students felt they had met some of the most inspiring people through their roles. And that their ideas and suggestions were taken seriously by the school.

Sharing Mary Ward's Story, Vision & Values - the Loreto way

There is a rich understanding at Loreto Chorlton of what it is to be a Mary Ward school; the values run deep here. They are clearly visible in the fabric of the school but more than this, they are expressed and cherished in day to day living. It is referred to as the Loreto way - this encompasses all aspects of school life and is currently being embedded in the teaching and learning strategy across school. This year's value of Internationality is a favourite with the community, reflecting the international nature of the school body and the multi faith heritage of the students.

The headteacher leads on Teaching for living and learning across the LEEN network and this clearly impacts the philosophy of education at the school. Fundamentally, the aspiration for the highest levels of teaching and learning is at the heart of leaders' desires. Students are nurtured and encouraged to achieve their best, the delivery of the curriculum across all subjects a sharp focus. The school challenges itself to ensure that they are focussed on the classroom experience with the mantra *"If we let you off, we let you down"*. The work of the extraordinary monitoring group and the programme of external validation speak of no complacency at governance and leadership level. As a result of this greater strategic focus outcomes in 2024 improved, with an overall P8 score of – 0.05.

The personal development provision has been carefully mapped out and delivered and is firmly contextualised to the Loreto ethos. It offers myriad opportunities for an *enriching and liberating* education that all Loreto establishments aspire to offer. It is a dynamic and aspirational curriculum which enhances the student experience and roots it firmly in an authentic experience that Mary Ward would approve of, to use her words: *'If done it must be so performed as better cannot be.'*

Religious Education

The RE department are firmly rooted in the Mary Ward values and spoke with one voice about their vision and determination to support all learners in their care. Their commitment to and passion for their subject and their students was very strong and they recognised the complexity of accompanying young people where sometimes 'tough love is needed'. Throughout discussions it was clear that their focus is on the individual young person and the need to meet them *where they are at*. This is a department steeped in the values of Mary Ward and sincere in living them out in their daily lives.

The department has designed an academic curriculum that confirms to national requirement and is woven through with the Loreto values. They are a reflective team, they know where they are going with the curriculum, believe that it best serves their students and are hopeful to impact overall outcomes. Whilst they achieve a high number of grades 9s at GCSE, colleagues recognise the continued focus needed to impact outcomes at every level.

Chaplaincy and JPIC

The school is blessed to have a Chaplain whose gentle approach to accompaniment and formation engages staff and students; many turn actively towards him and all welcome his presence and support. He meets fortnightly for line management meetings with the Headteacher. He is a key member of the LEEN Chaplaincy group and serves the Diocese of Salford as deacon. The Head is generous in her support of this and recognises what it brings back to the school as a result.

Students in the chaplaincy group were proud to have been selected. They said the process was competitive, but worth the effort. They spoke very highly of the Chaplain, describing him as “one of a kind.” One student said, “He believes in us – he supports us but also challenges and pushes us to do things we didn’t think we could do.” They described chaplaincy as a safe place. One student said it had made him a better person and that the work done through chaplaincy could change lives. They appreciated the opportunities to meet new people and grow in confidence. Another student reflected that the Chaplain had helped them understand other faiths and see things from different perspectives. This is a hope filled group of young people.

There is a clear routine of prayer in morning formation time with a Gospel message at the heart of it. We had the privilege of joining the Chaplaincy prayer group who help reflect and prepare the prayers for the whole school. This is an inspiring group of young witnesses – of different faiths, united in a common and prayerful purpose who cherish this time. Some of the group went to Rome on Pilgrimage others to the Loreto Llandudno centre on retreat. All spoke with enthusiasm and meaning of their experiences. These were recorded into a booklet which included reflections through poetry.

JPIC is seen as integral to Chaplaincy and student value the focus and outreach that it gives them. Whilst fundraising is a core element of what is achieved, key to their work is a focus on advocacy and Justice and Peace. Examples include working with the Jesuit Missions Team, and engagement in the Loreto CAFOD Big LENT Walk, during which they prayed the Stations of the Cross as a way of reflecting how, through Christ’s sacrifice we too can bring Hope into the world. In addition, they raised over £900 for CAFOD.

Loreto Chorlton - a place of witness

Governors expressed pride in the diversity, tolerance, and compassion shown by staff and students alike. They recognised that everyone is working to do their best for each and every child, which is not without challenges. Governance strongly supports the school’s values and ethos. In making difficult financial decisions, Governors ensure that Loreto values remain central. They feel empowered to challenge leaderships and engage in constructive conversations about how decisions reflect those values.

The presence of Loreto Sisters on the Board of Governors provides a valuable check and balance with regard to Mary Ward values. They emphasised that in major decisions all values must be considered thoroughly. Every child’s potential is explored with a view to uncovering strengths and talents. Governors praised the school’s excellent pastoral care and commitment to social justice, especially given the high number of students with complex needs and those eligible for free school meals. Initiatives such as the breakfast club and holiday revision sessions (to counter digital exclusion) were cited as examples of wraparound care that reflect Christian values.

Governors also commended the staff’s understanding and respect for all students. They particularly praised senior colleagues for their dedication. They value the Head for knowing every child’s name and background and fostering a deep sense of care throughout the school. One governor said: “The Head is utterly incredible – she knows every child and greets them each day. You can really feel the love and compassion at Governors’ meetings. It’s a privilege for me to have both my children at Loreto Chorlton. Being a Governor here has made me a better person.”

Parents said the school felt like a safe space for their children. One noted a visible change in their daughter, describing it as *“growth in service.”* Another praised the school for how it supported her son with medical issues – both inside and outside the classroom. She said, *“He was very quiet in primary school, but has really thrived here and made lots of friends.”* Parents also felt that concerns were dealt with quickly and sensitively. One parent shared: *“I can’t speak highly enough of the school. The staff are amazing – not just in what they do, but in how they truly know the children.”* They commented on the joyful atmosphere and genuine acceptance of all types of learners.

Agreed Development Points:

1. To embed the Loreto way across all aspects of teaching and learning
2. To continue the focus on academic excellence for all in Religious Studies