

## **School Retreats Policy.**

### **1. Scope**

As a Catholic school under the trusteeship of CEIST Our Lady of Mercy College provides a retreat annually for all our students. These retreats may be facilitated by outside bodies and conform to best practice as set down by the Department of Education & Science in the Child Protection Guidelines for Post Primary Schools, 2006, the Catholic Church in Ireland who have developed a comprehensive and integrated child protection policy entitled Our Children, Our Church, 2005 which is also consistent with national guidelines, Children First, 1999.

Our Lady of Mercy College Beaumont is committed to best practice for the safety and welfare of students. In essence best practice ensures that an organisation, actively encouraging the participation of students and young people, establishes systems and structures to ensure their protection. Best practice promotes the creation of a safe, enriching and nourishing environment where all feel safe and secure.

All Students have a fundamental right to be respected, nurtured, cared for and protected. This right is embedded in Gospel values underpinned in international and domestic law.

Retreats are an important part of Our Lady of Mercy College's spiritual engagement with young people and are organised as part of the Religious Education Programme.

### **2. Mission Statement:**

The core value of Our Lady of Mercy College Beaumont is respect for all and the nurturing of individual potential, academically, spiritually and culturally as a member of the school community and in the spirit of the Mercy Ethos.

### **3. Rationale:**

To go on a retreat is a very special event in a person's life. It is an opportunity to search, to explore, to open one's heart and mind to be touched by God. It can be wonderful, enriching experience, to move away for a time from the hustle and bustle of school and everyday life, to find for a short while, a space for prayer, peace and tranquillity. A retreat is recognised as an opportunity to enhance the spiritual, emotional and social development of young people.

The policies and procedures outlined in the Child Protection Guidelines for Post Primary Schools, 2006, Our Children, Our Church, 2005 and Children First, 1999 are guided by principles derived from both civil sources and Gospel values, including the principle that the welfare of the child is the first and paramount consideration. Our Lady of Mercy College considers child protection issues as being of paramount importance and will do everything possible to create a safe environment for young people engaging in school retreats.

### **4. Procedures for Retreats:**

#### **4.1 Retreat Team**

Any group or individual engaging with young people in a retreat setting will be made aware of the policies and procedures for child protection and they will be asked to confirm in writing that they will implement such policies and procedures.

In relation to child protection matters, all retreat team personnel must be vetted in accordance with State and Church guidelines, (DES Circular letter 0094/2006, June 2006).

The school will:

- Validate the credentials of all retreat team personnel
- Verify all references presented
- Check that the retreat team/centre has the approval of a body such as The School Chaplains Association or The Religion Teachers' Association.

Retreats involve careful planning. Copies of age appropriate programmes should will be submitted for approval by School Management, the Board of Management, Chaplain and RE team.

#### **4.2 School**

The school RE team will work closely with the retreat team prior to the retreat, on the days of the retreat and in follow up. The local clergy will be informed when the retreat is taking place. Students are asked to contribute to the cost of retreats by paying the RE money included on the Monies Due list.

#### **4.3 Students**

Retreats are an integral part of the curriculum in Our Lady of Mercy College. The Retreat Team may in consultation with the group develop a code of behaviour/ground rules for their own particular group at retreat time. Age appropriate language will be used as it is important that the students know what is and what is not acceptable with regard to their behaviour and that of others. Discussion of behaviour appropriate to a retreat setting will be mindful that a retreat presents each individual with an opportunity for a unique personal experience. No person has the right to compromise or interfere with this entitlement. The school Code of Behaviour, Anti Bullying Policy, Mobile Phones/Electronic Equipment & Substance Use, Vetting Policies (this list may not be exhaustive) apply during retreats.

#### **4.4 Retreat Day**

Health and Safety rules of the school or retreat venue apply to all.

The retreat leader will outline his/her wish that the day will be enriching and a fulfilling experience for all. The focus and theme of the day will be outlined and a spirit of care and respect established.

Mindful of the Department of Education & Science's Child Protection Guidelines for Post Primary Schools, 2006 and the Diocesan guiding principles of Our Children, Our Church (2005) the retreat team will:

- Treat all people at all times with courtesy, respect and dignity.
- Be mindful of Child Abuse issues.
- Aware that any form of bullying is unacceptable.
- Maintain appropriate boundaries at all times
- Be aware that inappropriate language or sexual suggestive comments or gestures are not permitted by anyone involved in a retreat experience.

- Be conscious that engagement with young people will be in an open manner and care should be taken not to spend a disproportionate amount of time with any particular young person or to show favouritism.
- Have an adequate ratio of retreat team personnel and supervising teachers to young people at all times.
- Be mindful of the age profile of the students and numbers when selecting rooms for group activity. There will be adequate space to facilitate easy access and freedom of movement amongst the group.
- Be aware that the students will be able to discuss their experience and concerns should any arise.

#### **4.5 Guiding Principles**

School retreats are occasions when young people are introduced to quiet time, when they experience prayer and spiritual sharing. Participation in organised reflections, meditation and suitable liturgy is also envisaged.

Group sessions during retreats are not occasions for individual counselling or deep personal sharing.

School retreats are not occasions for encouraging young people to share experiences or opinions which might make them vulnerable or expose them to peer-pressure or amusement.

The structure of the school retreat will respect the right of the individual and her family to privacy. Respect for the individual person is always paramount.

#### **4.6 Follow Up**

The RE team will compile a written report of the retreat experience, this will include an element of student evaluation. *See appendix*

A copy of the report will be given to the school principal.

Should a student divulge a concern about a retreat experience, the teacher to whom the concern is aired must liaise with the Designated Liaison Person. The school Board of Management has adopted the DES Child Protection Guidelines, 2004.

#### **References:**

Our Children, Our Church, *Child Protection Policies and Procedures for the Catholic Church in Ireland* (Dublin: Veritas Publications 2005)

Children First, *National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children* (Dublin: Stationery Office, 1999)

Child Protection, *Guidelines and Procedures for Post Primary Schools* (Dublin: Stationery Office, 2004)

*Reviewed June 14<sup>th</sup> 2017*

**Appendix 1**  
**Declaration Form for Retreat Teams**

Mindful of the guiding principles of the Child Protection Guidelines for post Primary Schools 2004 and Our Children, Our Church, 2005 that all children have a fundamental right to be respected, nurtured, cared for and protected, a right embedded in gospel values and underlines in international and domestic law, the retreat organisers in Our Lady of Mercy College authorised by the Board of Management, ask that prospective retreat team facilitators complete the following documentation in advance of any retreat being organised.

| <b>Retreat Team</b>  |  |  |
|----------------------|--|--|
| <b>Name</b>          |  |  |
| <b>Address</b>       |  |  |
|                      |  |  |
| <b>Telephone No.</b> |  |  |
| <b>e-mail</b>        |  |  |

| <b>Leader/Director</b> | <b>Team Members</b> | <b>Accreditation</b> |
|------------------------|---------------------|----------------------|
|                        |                     |                      |
|                        |                     |                      |
|                        |                     |                      |
|                        |                     |                      |
|                        |                     |                      |

Is each team member conversant with Diocesan (Our Children, Our Church, 2005) and State (Children First, 1999) policies regarding Child Protection matters?

Yes  No

Will each team member confirm in writing that they will observe and implement the above policies?

Yes  No

Does each team member comply with vetting arrangements for child protection in accordance with Church & State guidelines.

Yes  No

Please provide names and addresses of the last two schools where retreats were conducted, to include the name of the principal and contact number.

|                      |  |
|----------------------|--|
| <b>Name</b>          |  |
| <b>Address</b>       |  |
|                      |  |
| <b>Telephone No.</b> |  |

|                      |  |
|----------------------|--|
| <b>Name</b>          |  |
| <b>Address</b>       |  |
|                      |  |
| <b>Telephone No.</b> |  |

I/we declare that the above information is true and that we are fit to facilitate school retreats/days of reflection.

| <b>Signed</b> | <b>Date</b> |
|---------------|-------------|
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|               |             |
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|               |             |
|               |             |
|               |             |

**Appendix 2  
Retreat Day Report Form**

|                        |             |                        |
|------------------------|-------------|------------------------|
| <b>Venue</b>           |             |                        |
| <b>Date of Retreat</b> |             |                        |
| <b>Class</b>           | <b>Year</b> | <b>No. of Students</b> |
|                        |             |                        |

|                             |          |
|-----------------------------|----------|
| <b>Retreat Team Members</b> |          |
| <b>1</b>                    | <b>4</b> |
| <b>2</b>                    | <b>5</b> |
| <b>3</b>                    | <b>6</b> |
| <b>Retreat Theme</b>        |          |
|                             |          |
| <b>Liturgies Conducted</b>  |          |
|                             |          |
| <b>Other Activities</b>     |          |
|                             |          |
|                             |          |

|                           |  |
|---------------------------|--|
| <b>Student Evaluation</b> |  |
|                           |  |
|                           |  |
|                           |  |
| <b>RE Team Evaluation</b> |  |
|                           |  |
|                           |  |

**Signed:** ..... **Date:** .....

**Signed:** ..... **Date:** .....

**Signed:** ..... **Date:** .....