

Admission Policy of Our Lady of Mercy Secondary School

Ozanam Street, Waterford.

Roll number: 64971W

Under the Trusteeship of Ceist

1. Introduction.

This Admission Policy complies with the requirements of the Education Act 1998, the Education (Admission to Schools) Act 2018 and the Equal Status Act 2000. In drafting this policy, the board of management of the school has consulted with school staff, the school patron and with parents of students attending the school.

The policy was approved by the school patron on 12 January 2023. It is published on the school's website and will be made available in hardcopy if requested.

The relevant dates and timelines for the admission process to Our Lady of Mercy Secondary School are set out in the school's annual admission notice which is published annually on the school's website at least one week before the commencement of the admission process for the school year concerned.

This policy must be read in conjunction with the annual admission notice for the school year concerned.

The application form for admission is published on the school's website and will be made available in hardcopy if requested.

2. Characteristic spirit and general objectives of the school.

Our Lady of Mercy Secondary School is a Catholic all girls voluntary secondary school with a Catholic ethos under the trusteeship of CEIST (Catholic Education an Irish Schools' Trust).

In accordance with S.15 (2) (b) of the Education Act, 1998, the board of management of Our Lady of Mercy Secondary School shall uphold, and be accountable to the patron for so upholding, the characteristic spirit of the school as determined by the cultural, educational, moral, religious, social, linguistic and spiritual values and traditions which inform and are characteristic of the objectives and conduct of the school.

"Catholic Ethos" in the context of a Catholic voluntary secondary school means the ethos and characteristic spirit of the Roman Catholic Church which aims to promote:

- (a) the full and harmonious development of all aspects of the person, including the intellectual, physical, cultural, moral and spiritual aspects; and
- (b) a living relationship with God and with other people; and
- (c) a philosophy of life inspired by belief in God and in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus; and
- (d) the formation of the pupils in the Catholic faith

in accordance with the doctrines, practices and traditions of the Roman Catholic Church, and/or such ethos and/or characteristic spirit as may be determined or interpreted from time to time by the Irish Episcopal Conference.

Catholic education is therefore a lifelong process of human growth and development which has been at the heart of the Church's mission since Jesus Christ urged his disciples to 'go teach all nations'. The person of Christ is the core of Catholic education.

Our Lady of Mercy Secondary School draws on the richness of the religious and cultural heritage of the past, interpreted and lived out for students living in today's world. The charisma

of founder Catherine McAuley of the Religious Sisters of Mercy who began this school is of very significant importance in the life of the school.

As a CEIST school, Our Lady of Mercy Secondary School values teaching as one of the most important of all human activities. Our school seeks to build a quality learning community that welcomes, and bears witness to the Gospel values of Jesus Christ, expressed through the lens of the CEIST Charter. These are encapsulated in the core values which are intended to support and nourish the lives of the people who are at the heart of our schools.

- ***Promoting Spiritual and Human Development***
- ***Achieving Quality in Teaching and Learning***
- ***Showing Respect for Every Person***
- ***Creating Community***
- ***Being Just and Responsible***

Our Lady of Mercy Secondary School is inspired by the words of Jesus Christ to his disciples, "I have come that they may have life and have it to the full" (Jn 10:10). Because of this, Our Lady of Mercy Secondary School provides a rich, holistic education in the Catholic tradition where engagement with and development of the whole person; the intellectual, moral, religious, physical, spiritual and psychological are at the core of our practice.

Education has as its goal the formation of a human person who is free, rational and mature in relationships. Our Lady of Mercy Secondary School offers educational opportunities which promote excellence so that students can respond responsibly and creatively to their own lives, the lives of others and to the earth, which is our common home.

In Our Lady of Mercy Secondary School the dignity and uniqueness of every human being as a child of God is acknowledged and affirmed. The Catholic school is an inclusive community, ideally built on love and formed by the interaction and collaboration of its various components: students, parents, teachers, non-teaching staff and members of the Board of Management. Catholic schools are also outward looking. They are connected to their local parish and Diocese and other local organisations which enrich the life of the school. Our school draws on the rich resources of the local community and, in turn, contributes to the life of the local community.

As a Catholic school, Religious Education is central to our curriculum. Alongside Religious Education, the school supports the formation in faith of our students through many school-based experiences of prayer and ritual. All students' spiritual growth is further enhanced through such areas as sport, language, nature, art, poetry and music.

Mission Statement

To educate our students to achieve their full potential in an inclusive and Christian environment

Vision and General Objectives of Our Lady of Mercy Secondary School

In the tradition of Mercy education we aim:

- To promote a holistic development of all members of the school community
- To promote excellence in Teaching and Learning
- To show respect, care and compassion for every member of the school community

- To share in the ongoing search for a more loving, just and peaceful world

3. Admission Statement.

Our Lady of Mercy Secondary School will not discriminate in its admission of a student to the school on any of the following:

- (a) the gender ground of the student or the applicant in respect of the student concerned,
- (b) the civil status ground of the student or the applicant in respect of the student concerned,
- (c) the family status ground of the student or the applicant in respect of the student concerned,
- (d) the sexual orientation ground of the student or the applicant in respect of the student concerned,
- (e) the religion ground of the student or the applicant in respect of the student concerned,
- (f) the disability ground of the student or the applicant in respect of the student concerned,
- (g) the ground of race of the student or the applicant in respect of the student concerned,
- (h) the Traveller community ground of the student or the applicant in respect of the student concerned, or
- (i) the ground that the student or the applicant in respect of the student concerned has special educational needs

As per section 61(3) of the Education Act 1998, 'civil status ground', 'disability ground', 'discriminate', 'family status ground', 'gender ground', 'ground of race', 'religion ground', 'sexual orientation ground' and 'Traveller community ground' shall be construed in accordance with section 3 of the Equal Status Act 2000.

Our Lady of Mercy Secondary School is an all-girls school and does not discriminate where it refuses to admit a boy applying for admission to the school.

Our Lady of Mercy Secondary School is a school whose objective is to provide education in an environment which promotes certain religious values and does not discriminate where it admits a student of catholic religious denomination in preference to others.

Our Lady of Mercy Secondary School will cooperate with the National Council for Special Education in the performance by the Council of its functions under the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act 2004 in relation to the provision of education to children with special educational needs, including in particular by the provision and operation of a special class or classes when requested to do so by the Council.

Our Lady of Mercy Secondary School will comply with any direction served on the Patron or the Board, as the case may be, under section 37A and any direction served on the Board under section 67(4B) of the Education Act.

4. Special Educational Needs in Our Lady of Mercy Secondary School

For information on special educational needs in our school please see our Whole School Inclusion policy available on our website.

5. Admission of Students.

This school shall admit each student seeking admission except where –

- a) the school is oversubscribed (please see [section 6](#) below for further details)
- b) a parent of a student, when required by the principal in accordance with section 23(4) of the Education (Welfare) Act 2000, fails to confirm in writing that the code of behaviour of the school is acceptable to him or her and that he or she shall make all reasonable efforts to ensure compliance with such code by the student.

Our Lady of Mercy Secondary School provides education exclusively for girls and may refuse to admit as a student a person who is not of the gender provided for by this school.

Our Lady of Mercy Secondary School is a catholic school and may refuse to admit as a student a person who is not of catholic denomination where it is proved that the refusal is essential to maintain the ethos of the school.

Applications must meet any criteria set down by the Department of Education and Skills.

Enrolment Procedures

Applications from pupils to enrol in first year:

- Feeder primary schools are normally visited by arrangement in September the year prior to entry to first year in Our Lady of Mercy Secondary School. The purpose of these visits is to:
 - Inform 6th class pupils about the school
 - Distribute the school prospectus
 - Extend an invitation to attend our Open Night.
- An advertisement is placed in the local papers, notifying the public of the date, time and venue of the Open Night which is usually held in September/October of the first term. The purpose of the Open Night is to inform families about ethos, enrolment, pastoral care, curriculum, extra-curriculum activities, induction of first year students, school policies and facilities.
- Parents/Guardians of all applicants will be informed in writing of the school's decision within 21 school working days of the closing date for applications (usually late October/early November – see Admission Notice for exact date each year).
- The letter to successful applicants will include notification of the date of the entrance assessment. The entrance assessment is held usually in February and helps the school to identify students who may need extra or specialised resources. Subsequent to acceptance and confirmation of admission to Our Lady of Mercy Secondary School and usually following the entrance assessment, contact may be made with the primary schools to obtain more complete information. Direct contact may be made with individual parents/guardians at the discretion of the school management.
- A Welcome Night for incoming first year students and their parents/guardians is usually held in March/April prior to entry. At this night students/parents/guardians are provided with information such as supports available to students, expected standards of behaviour including anti-bullying policy and curriculum provision. Each student and her parents/guardians meet one of our teachers. At this meeting the teacher will review the enrolment form to confirm the data submitted.
- Induction of the first year students takes place at the beginning of the new school year (August/September). This process is intended to make them feel welcome, to address their concerns and to aid familiarisation with the new school.
- Application forms are usually distributed at Open Night and are available from the school office during school opening hours.

- Parents/guardians will be informed of the closing date for return of application forms at the Open Night.

6. Oversubscription.

The number of places being made available by the board of management for 1st year is specified each year in the Annual Admission Notice (see the school website www.mercywaterford.net). In the event that the school is oversubscribed, the school will, when deciding on applications for admission, apply the following selection criteria in the order listed below to those applications that are received within the timeline for receipt of applications as set out in the school's annual admission notice.

- Sisters (including half-sisters and step-sisters) of current pupils
- Sisters (including half-sisters and step-sisters) of past pupils
- 6th class pupils from Our Lady of Mercy Senior Primary School, Military Road, Waterford
- Pupils from local feeder schools:
 - Gaelscoil na nDeise, Bother Charraig Phiarais, Port Lairge
 - Waterford Educate Together, Carrickpherish Road, Co. Waterford
 - Light of Christ NS, Coxtown, Dunmore East, Co. Waterford
 - St. Saviour's NS, Ballybeg, Waterford
 - Scoil Mhuire National School, Mooncoin, Co. Kilkenny
 - Faithlegg National School Faithlegg, Co. Waterford.
 - Dunhill National School, Ballyphilip, Dunhill, Co. Waterford
 - St. Beacon's NS, Mullinavat, Co. Kilkenny,
 - St Colmcille NS, Bigwood, Mullinavat, Co. Milkenny,
 - Slieverue NS, Via Waterford, Co. Kilkenny
 - Scoil Seamus Naofa, Glenmore, Glenmore via New Ross, Co. Kilkenny
 - Scoil Mhuire, Butlerstown, Co. Waterford
 - Gaelscoil Phort Lairge, Baile Mhic Gonair, Port Lairge ,Waterford City X91AX81
 - Passage East NS, Crooke, Passage East, Co. Waterford
 - Carrigeen National School, Carrigeen, Co. Kilkenny
 - St. Senan's NS, Kilmacow, Co. Kilkenny
 - St. Patrick's NS, Strangsmills, Kilmacow, Co. Kilkenny, X91 KP 57

If necessary, after the above criteria have been applied the remaining places will be allocated on a random basis i.e.by an independently supervised lottery, as follows:

- The name of each student in the relevant category entitled to participate in this random process will be placed in a drum.
- In all cases, when this random process is being conducted, applications received on behalf of twins, triplets, or daughters from the same family unit will be treated as one applicant. This will neither increase nor reduce the chances of any applicant being offered a place.
- The names will be drawn from the drum, one by one, until the drum is empty.
- The order in which the names are drawn from the drum will be recorded on a numbered list.
- Places will be offered in the order in which names are drawn from the drum until available places are filled.
- The remaining names on the list will be placed on a numbered waiting list in the order in which the names were drawn from the drum.

Late applications into any year will only be considered after all on-time applications have been processed. The names on any late applications will then be added to the end of the waiting list in date order of receipt in the office.

7. What will not be considered or taken into account.

In accordance with section 62(7)(e) of the Education Act, the school will not consider or take into account any of the following in deciding on applications for admission or when placing a student on a waiting list for admission to the school:

- (a) a student's prior attendance at a pre-school or pre-school service, including naíonraí,
- (b) the payment of fees or contributions to the school,
- (c) a student's academic ability, skills or aptitude;
- (d) the occupation, financial status, academic ability, skills or aptitude of a student's parents,
- (e) requirement that a student, or his or her parents, attend an interview, open day or other meeting as a condition of admission,
- (f) a student's connection to the school by virtue of a member of his or her family attending or having previously attended the school; other than in relation to the selection criteria described in Section 6,
- (g) the date and time on which an application for admission was received by the school: This is subject to the application being received at any time during the period specified for receiving applications set out in the annual admission notice of the school for the school year concerned.

8. Decisions on applications.

All decisions on applications for admission to Our Lady of Mercy Secondary School will be based on the following:

- Our school's admission policy
- The school's annual admission notice
- The information provided by the applicant in the school's official application form received during the period specified in our annual admission notice for receiving applications

(Please see [section 14](#) below in relation to applications received outside of the admissions period and [section 15](#) below in relation to applications for places in years other than the intake group.)

Selection criteria that are not included in our school admission policy will not be used to make a decision on an application for a place in our school.

9. Notifying applicants of decisions.

Applicants will be informed in writing as to the decision of the school, within the timeline outlined in the annual admissions notice.

If a student is not offered a place in our school, the reasons why they were not offered a place will be communicated in writing to the applicant, including, where applicable, details of the student's ranking against the selection criteria and details of the student's place on the waiting list for the school year concerned.

Applicants will be informed of the right to seek a review/right of appeal of the school's decision (see [section 18](#) below for further details).

10. Acceptance of an offer of a place by an applicant.

In accepting an offer of admission from Our Lady of Mercy Secondary School you must indicate—

(i) whether or not you have accepted an offer of admission for another school or schools. If you have accepted such an offer, you must also provide details of the offer or offers concerned, and

(ii) whether or not you have applied for and are awaiting confirmation of an offer of admission from another school or schools, and if so, you must provide details of the other school or schools concerned.

Applicants should be aware that failure to disclose this information on the acceptance of a place may lead to an offer being withdrawn by the school.

11. Circumstances in which offers may not be made or may be withdrawn.

An offer of admission may not be made or may be withdrawn by Our Lady of Mercy Secondary School where—

- (i) it is established that information contained in the application is false or misleading.
- (ii) an applicant fails to confirm acceptance of an offer of admission on or before the date set out in the annual admission notice of the school.
- (iii) the parent of a student, when required by the principal in accordance with section 23(4) of the Education (Welfare) Act 2000, fails to confirm in writing that the code of behaviour of the school is acceptable to him or her and that he or she shall make all reasonable efforts to ensure compliance with such code by the student; or
- (iv) an applicant has failed to comply with the requirements of 'acceptance of an offer' as set out in [section 10](#) above.

The board of management has a duty of care to ensure as far as practicable the health and safety of the students and staff of the school. In addition, the board of management is required under section 15(1) of the Education Act 1998 to provide, or cause to be provided, an appropriate education for each student at the school for which that board has responsibility.

An application for admission may be refused, therefore, where the admission of the applicant would pose a significant risk to the health and safety of the applicant or students and staff of the school, or risk significantly interfering with the right of other students to an appropriate education.

12. Sharing of Data with other schools.

Applicants should be aware that section 66(6) of the Education (Admission to Schools) Act 2018 allows for the sharing of data between schools in order to facilitate the efficient admission of students. Section 66(6) allows a school to provide a patron or another board of management with a list of the students in relation to whom—

- (i) an application for admission to the school has been received,

- (ii) an offer of admission to the school has been made, or
- (iii) an offer of admission to the school has been accepted.

The list may include any or all of the following:

- (i) the date on which an application for admission was received by the school;
- (ii) the date on which an offer of admission was made by the school;
- (iii) the date on which an offer of admission was accepted by an applicant;
- (iv) a student's personal details including his or her name, address, date of birth and personal public service number (within the meaning of section 262 of the Social Welfare Consolidation Act 2005).

13. Waiting list in the event of oversubscription.

In the event of there being more applications to the school year concerned than places available, a waiting list of students whose applications for admission to Our Lady of Mercy Secondary School were unsuccessful due to the school being oversubscribed will be compiled and will remain valid for the school year in which admission is being sought.

Placement on the waiting list of Our Lady of Mercy Secondary School is in the order of priority assigned to the students' applications after the school has applied the selection criteria in accordance with this admission policy.

Offers of any subsequent places that become available for and during the school year in relation to which admission is being sought will be made to those students on the waiting list, in accordance with the order of priority in relation to which the students have been placed on the list.

14. Late Applications.

All applications for admission received after the closing date as outlined in the annual admission notice will be considered and decided upon in accordance with our school's admissions policy, the Education Admissions to School Act 2018 and any regulations made under that Act.

Late applicants will be notified of the decision in respect of their application not later than three weeks after the date on which the school received the application. Late applicants will be offered a place if there is a place available. In the event that there is no place available, the name of the applicant will be added to the waiting list.

15. Procedures for admission of students to other years and during the school year.

The school will make every reasonable effort to facilitate a girl seeking to transfer into the school. Students who wish to transfer from other schools or who wish to join the school during the school year must submit an Application Form. An application to transfer in from another school is subject to availability of places in requested year group and/or programme. The school may also consider compatibility between subjects studied by the applicant and the subjects available in the school.

An application in respect of a girl who has been expelled from another school will be considered by the board of management only when all appeal avenues have been exhausted on her behalf in respect of her previous school.

Where the decision is to accept a student on transfer a place may be offered immediately, or from the beginning of the following academic year.

The board of management has a duty of care to ensure as far as practicable the health and safety of the students and staff of the school. In addition, the board of management is required under section 15(1) of the Education Act 1998 to provide, or cause to be provided, an appropriate education for each student at the school for which that board has responsibility.

An application for admission may be refused, therefore, where the admission of the applicant would pose a significant risk to the health and safety of the applicant or students and staff of the school, or risk significantly interfering with the right of other students to an appropriate education.

16. Declaration in relation to the non-charging of fees.

The board of Our Lady of Mercy Secondary School or any persons acting on its behalf shall not, except in accordance with section 64 of the Education Act 1998, charge fees for or seek payment or contributions (howsoever described) as a condition of-

- (a) an application for admission of a student to the school, or
- (b) the admission or continued enrolment of a student in the school.

17. Arrangements regarding students not attending religious instruction.

A parent of a student, or a student who has reached the age of 18, who wishes to attend Our Lady of Mercy Secondary School without attending religious instruction should make a written request to the Principal. A meeting will be then be arranged with the parent or the student, as the case may be, to discuss how the request may be accommodated by the school.

18. Reviews/appeals.

Review of decisions by the board of management

The parent of the student, or in the case of a student who has reached the age of 18 years, the student, may request the board to review a decision to refuse admission. Such requests must be made in accordance with Section 29C of the Education Act 1998.

The timeline within which such a review must be requested and the other requirements applicable to such reviews are set out in the procedures determined by the Minister under section 29B of the Education Act 1998 which are published on the website of the Department of Education and Skills.

The board will conduct such reviews in accordance with the requirements of the procedures determined under Section 29B and with section 29C of the Education Act 1998.

Note: Where an applicant has been refused admission due to the school being oversubscribed, the applicant **must request a review** of that decision by the board of management prior to making an appeal under section 29 of the Education Act 1998.

Where an applicant has been refused admission due to a reason other than the school being oversubscribed, the applicant **may request a review** of that decision by the board of management prior to making an appeal under section 29 of the Education Act 1998.

Right of appeal

Under Section 29 of the Education Act 1998, the parent of the student, or in the case of a student who has reached the age of 18 years, the student, may appeal a decision of this school to refuse admission.

An appeal may be made under Section 29 (1)(c)(i) of the Education Act 1998 where the refusal to admit was due to the school being oversubscribed.

An appeal may be made under Section 29 (1)(c)(ii) of the Education Act 1998 where the refusal to admit was due a reason other than the school being oversubscribed.

Where an applicant has been refused admission due to the school being oversubscribed, the applicant **must request a review** of that decision by the board of management **prior to making an appeal** under section 29 of the Education Act 1998. (see Review of decisions by the Board of Management)

Where an applicant has been refused admission due to a reason other than the school being oversubscribed, the applicant **may request a review** of that decision by the board of management prior to making an appeal under section 29 of the Education Act 1998. (see Review of decisions by the Board of Management)

Appeals under Section 29 of the Education Act 1998 will be considered and determined by an independent appeals committee appointed by the Minister for Education and Skills.

The timeline within which such an appeal must be made and the other requirements applicable to such appeals are set out in the procedures determined by the Minister under section 29B of the Education Act 1998 which are published on the website of the Department of Education and Skills.