

August 2020

ADMISSIONS POLICY



OUR LADY'S SECONDARY SCHOOL

Admission Policy of Our Lady's Secondary School

School Address: Belmullet, Co. Mayo

Roll number: 64570E

School Patron/s: 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 children attending the school.

The policy was approved by the school patron on 19TH August 2020. It is published on the school's website and will be made available in hardcopy, on request, to any person who requests it.

The relevant dates and timelines for Our Lady's Secondary School admission process 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 on request to any person who requests it.

2. Characteristic spirit and general objectives of the school

Our Lady's Secondary School is a Catholic Co-educational 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's 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’s 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 charism of founder Catherine McAuley of the Religious Order, Sisters of Mercy who began this school is of very significant importance in the life of the school.

As a CEIST school, Our Lady’s 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’s 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’s 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's 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's 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

Our Lady's Secondary School is a co-educational voluntary Catholic Secondary School under the trusteeship of CEIST. Our aim is to promote the development of the total person, by creating a climate where the spiritual, intellectual, emotional, social and cultural development of all its students is a priority.

This is done in a milieu where we aim:

- To promote Christian values of justice, mercy and respect for each other in keeping with the message of the Gospel.
- To uphold an agreed code of behaviour.
- To cater for all students' learning abilities and to ensure the provision of a choice of leisure and recreational activities.
- To develop each student's sense of self-worth and self-esteem by respecting each student for what he/she is - not for what they achieved.
- To encourage the active involvement of parents and the local community as partners of the education process.
- To encourage religious practices and to foster commitment to the church and its teachings.

General Objectives of the School

Our Lady's Secondary School, Belmullet, was established by the Sisters of Mercy in 1943, to provide a Christian education for the young people of the town and of the surrounding area. In 2007, the trusteeship of the school passed to CEIST (Catholic Education an Irish Schools Trust). Faith in Jesus Christ remains the foundation stone upon which the culture and ethos of the school are built. All students are encouraged and enabled to become fully developed, well-integrated members of society. The underlying educational aims of the Board of Management are drawn from the religious and educational philosophy of CEIST. The school supports the principles of:

- Inclusiveness
- Equality of access and participation in the school
- Parental choice in relation to enrolments
- Respect for the diversity of traditions, values, beliefs, languages and ways of life in our society.

The community of the school works in a holistic manner to ensure that dependence is gradually replaced by responsibility for self, society and the world. The dignity of each student, staff member and parent is honoured and reflected in school policies and structure, including this policy. While educational excellence is promoted, it is the needs of the learner that direct the education and social development of the school. Where possible the school will engage with alternative approaches to education especially for those who are deemed disadvantaged.

Admission Policy Rationale:

This policy aims to ensure that appropriate procedures are in place to enable the school

- To make decisions on all applications in an open and transparent manner consistent with the Mission Statement of the School, the admissions policy as defined by the Board of Management and legislative requirements
- To make an accurate and appropriate assessment of the capacity of the school to cater for the needs of applicants in the light of all resources available to it.

Management:

The school is run by a Board of Management composed of four nominees of the trustees, two teacher nominees and two parent nominees. The School Principal acts as secretary to the Board.

Curriculum:

The school follows the curricular programmes prescribed by the Department of Education which may be amended from time to time, in accordance with Sections 9 & 30 of the Education Act 1998.

The following programmes are currently offered by the school:

- New Junior Cycle
- The Transition Year Programme
- The Established Leaving Certificate
- The Leaving Certificate Applied Programme
- The Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme

The range of subjects and programmes provided by the school is outlined in the school prospectus and may be changed from time to time.

Extra-curricular Activities:

To complement the formal curriculum and enhance the holistic development of the student the School provides a wide range of activities including sports, music, personal development and cultural activities.

3. Admission Statement

Our Lady's 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.

All Denominational Schools

Our Lady's 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 refuses to admit as a student a person who is not Roman Catholic denomination and it is proved that the refusal is essential to maintain the ethos of the school.

Schools with Special Education Class(es)

Our Lady's Secondary School is a school which has established special classes, with the approval of the Minister for Education and Skills, which provides an education exclusively for students with a category or categories of special educational needs specified by the Minister and may refuse to admit to the class a student who does not have the category of needs specified.

4. Categories of Special Educational Needs catered for in the school/special class

Our Lady's Secondary School with the approval of the Minister for Education and Skills, has established classes to provide an education exclusively for students with Autism/Autistic Spectrum Disorders and Moderate General Learning Difficulties.

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

6. Oversubscription

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:

Selection Criteria

1. Applicants attending feeder primary schools who have siblings attending or have attended Our Lady's Secondary School. (See Appendix 2)
2. Applicants who are the children of staff currently employed by Our Lady's Secondary School
3. Applicants whose parent(s)/guardian(s) or grandparents attended Our Lady's Secondary School in the past (Maximum of 25% limit of available spaces)

4. All other applicants

In the event that there are two or more students tied for a place or places in any of the selection criteria categories above (the number of applicants exceeds the number of remaining places), the following arrangements will apply:

- **the available place will be offered to a student determined by an independently supervised lottery**

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 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 the case of the school wishing to include a selection criteria based on (1) siblings of a student attending or having attended the school and/or (2) parents or grandparents of a student having attended the school.

8. Decisions on applications

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

- Our school's admission policy
- The school's annual admission notice (where applicable)
- 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's 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 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's 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 Act 1998 allows for the sharing of certain information 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's 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's 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 1998 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 procedures of the school in relation to the admission of students who are not already admitted to the school to classes or years other than the school's intake group are as follows:

This school shall admit each student seeking admission except where –

- (a) the school is oversubscribed (please see section 6 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

The procedures of the school in relation to the admission of students who are not already admitted to the school, after the commencement of the school year in which admission is sought, are as follows:

- (a) the school is oversubscribed (please see section 6 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

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.

Applications will not be accepted from students who are the subject of ongoing disciplinary proceedings in another school which includes any ongoing statutory procedures in accordance with the Education Act (1998) or the Education (Welfare) Act 2000. Applicants must meet criteria laid down by the Department of Education & Skills.

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

This rule applies to all schools.

The board of Our Lady's Secondary School or any persons acting on its behalf will not 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

The following are the school's arrangements for students, where the parents or in the case of a student who has reached the age of 18 years, the student, who has requested that the student attend the school without attending religious instruction in the school. These arrangements will not result in a reduction in the school day of such students:

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

The school will endeavour to accommodate the student in the following order:

1. The student will remain in the classroom under the supervision of the teacher.
2. The student can attend another supervised subject class, if one is available.

18. Reviews/Appeal

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.

Appendix 1

Special Education Provision

In order to ensure that the school can adequately prepare for the child's needs it gathers information in relation to special educational needs from a variety of sources including using school-based data and information from parents and external professionals. These sources include the following:

- Consultation with primary school personnel including the Principal and learning support teacher(s).
- Consultation with parents on receipt of enrolment applications with identified needs.
- 6th Class Report Card – My Profile sheet for children and My Child's Profile sheet for parents
- Using Psychological reports.
- Consultation with NEPS psychologists and other support professionals, with parents' permission.
- Observation of students on an on-going basis to identify any problems that may occur.
- Ongoing monitoring of assessments.
- Identification from diagnostic tests.

The Continuum of Support provides a framework for school to enable them to identify and respond to students' needs in a flexible way. This process is also supported through engagement with external professionals as required.

Our Lady's Secondary School with the approval of the Minister for Education and Skills, has established classes to provide an education exclusively for students with Autism/Autistic Spectrum Disorders and Moderate General Learning Difficulties.

Appendix 2

Primary Feeder Schools

- Aughlasheen
- Aughtleam
- Bangor Erris
- Bárnatra
- Belmullet
- Binghamstown
- Corclough
- Doohoma
- Drumgallagh
- Drumslide
- Geesala
- Glenamoy
- Glencastle
- Inver
- Pullathomas

This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on

Signed: Kathleen Doherty
Kathleen Doherty,
Chairperson of the Board of Management

Signed: Edmund Holmes
Edmund Holmes,
Principal

Date: 14/9/20

Date: 14-9-2020.

Review:

Policy will be reviewed annually in line with the needs of the school community.