

## **Admission Policy of Our Lady's Secondary School**

**Castleblayney, Co. Monaghan**

**Roll number: 64770M**

**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 June 10<sup>th</sup> 2021 (an updated policy was ratified by the Board of Management on November 5<sup>th</sup> 2024) 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's 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 Catherine McCauley and the 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.

### **Our Lady's Secondary School Mission Statement**

Our Lady's Secondary School is a Voluntary Catholic Secondary School operating under the trusteeship of CEIST according to the traditions of the Sisters of Mercy. We, the staff and students, enjoy working together to realise our full potential in a healthy, safe, stimulating and friendly environment where the atmosphere is one of mutual respect, cooperation and challenge. We take a holistic approach focusing on the wellbeing and development of each individual socially, culturally and academically. Within our school community, each student is treated equally. All are considered uniquely talented, with effort valued as much as excellence. On a day-to-day basis, the Christian message inspires everyone in the school to be charitable, inclusive and understanding.

### **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.

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 admits a student of Catholic faith in preference to others.

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 of Catholic faith and it is proved that the refusal is essential to maintain the ethos of the school.

Our Lady’s Secondary School is a school which has established 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 mild (two classes catering for 11 students in each class) and moderate (1 class catering for 8 students) general learning difficulties.

A student will only be considered for a place in our mild general learning difficulty class based on the following NCSE / DES criteria:

- A diagnosis of a mild GLD following a cognitive assessment by an educational psychologist.
- A recommendation for placement in such a setting. (mild GLD class)
- A rationale for this recommendation.

A student will only be considered for a place in our moderate general learning difficulty class based on the following NCSE / DES criteria:

- A diagnosis of a moderate GLD following a cognitive assessment by an educational psychologist.
- A recommendation for placement in such a setting. (moderate GLD class)
- A rationale for this recommendation.

School management may also liaise with the NEPS Psychologist to ensure that placement in a special class is the optimum setting for the student at that time given their learning and adaptive needs. The school will submit the relevant documentation to the NCSE who will decide if the student meets the criteria for the mild or moderate classes.

#### **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 (appendix 1 ) 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
- c) Our Lady’s Secondary School is a Catholic school and may refuse to admit as a student a person who is not of the Catholic faith where it is proved that the refusal is essential to maintain the ethos of the school.
- d) The special classes attached to Our Lady’s Secondary School provide an education exclusively for students with *mild and moderate general learning difficulties* and the school may refuse admission to this class, where the student concerned does not have the specified category of special educational needs provided for in this class. The NCSE may also refuse admissions to these classes if the students does not meet their criteria.

**6. Oversubscription (this section must be completed by all schools including schools that do not anticipate being oversubscribed)**

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:

- Category 1
  - Siblings of current students.
  - Siblings of past pupils.
  - Immediate relatives of school community i.e. children and siblings of current staff
- Category 2
  - The first child in the family to attend post primary school and who attends the feeder school listed below.
- Category 3 (Subject to a maximum of 25% of the available spaces as set out in the school’s annual admission notice).
  - Sons / daughters of past pupils of Our Lady’s Secondary School who attend the feeder schools listed below.
- Category 4
  - Remaining students from the feeder schools below.
  - ⊖ Feeder Schools
    - Convent Girls N.S. Castleblayney
    - Castleblayney Boy’s N.S.
    - Broomfield N.S.
    - Scoil Mhuire N.S. Clontibret
    - Aughnafarcon N.S.

- Oram N.S;
  - Annalitten N.S.
  - Doohamlet N.S;
  - Central School Castleblayney
  - Central School Clontibret
  - St.Oliver Plunkett's N.S.Loughmourne
  - Scoil Eanna N.S. Ballybay
  - Annyalla N.S.
  - Scoil Mhuire N.S. Latton
  - Lisdoonan NS
  - Gaelscoil Lorgan.
- Category 5
    - 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:

In the event that the number to be admitted on this basis exceeds the number of places available, places will be filled by lottery and the remaining students will be placed on a waiting list.

In the event that places are being allocated by lottery, gender balance male/female will apply and places will be allocated alternatively to boys and girls. Any such lottery will be conducted by the Board of Management and will be independently overseen. For students being placed on a waiting list similar arrangements will apply.

## **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 other than in relation to admission to a special class insofar as it is necessary in order to ascertain whether or not the student has the category of special educational needs concerned.
- (d) The occupation, financial status, academic ability, skills or aptitude of a student's parents.
- (e) A 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 the case of siblings attending or having attended Our Lady's and parents having attended the school as included in the selection criteria in the previous section' In relation to parents having attended, a school may only apply this criterion to a maximum of 25% of the available spaces as set out in the school's annual admission notice.
- (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's 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'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.
- (v) 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 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'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 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 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.

In order to ensure that the educational interests of incoming students are met the Board of Management may instruct the Principal to request the following:

- A meeting with the student and their parent / guardian
- A reference from the previous school that the student attended.
- A transfer form from the previous school that the student attended.
- A copy of school reports from the previous school that the student attended.

***Admission to Our Lady's Secondary School is not conditional on any of the above.***

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

The Board of Management of Our Lady's 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**

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 be then be arranged with the parent or the student, as the case may be, to discuss how that 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 of Management 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 of Management 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.

## OUR LADY'S SECONDARY SCHOOL ANNUAL ADMISSION NOTICE FOR 2024/25

Copies of the school's **Admission Policy** and the **Application Form for Admission** for the 2025/26 school year are available as follows:

To download at the school website [www.olss.ie](http://www.olss.ie)

On request: By emailing the Principal at [office@olss.ie](mailto:office@olss.ie) or writing to The Principal, Our Lady's Secondary School, Castleblayney, Co. Monaghan

### 1. Application and Decision Dates for admission to 1<sup>st</sup> Year for 2025/26

1.	The school will commence accepting applications for admission on	October 1 <sup>st</sup> 2024
2.	The school will cease accepting applications for admission on	October 25 <sup>th</sup> 2024
3.	Applicants will be notified in writing of the decision on their application by	November 15 <sup>th</sup> 2024
4.	Applicants must confirm acceptance of an offer of admission by	December 6 <sup>th</sup> 2024

Failure by an applicant to accept an offer by **December 6<sup>th</sup> 2024** may result in the offer being withdrawn.

**2. Application and Decision Dates for admission to Our Lady's Secondary School Special Class for 2025/26**

(If the school has more than one class that caters for different categories of SEN, details of the numbers of places for each of the classes must be provided.)

1.	The school will commence accepting applications for admission to the special class on	October 1 <sup>st</sup> 2024
2.	The school shall cease accepting applications for admission to the special class on	October 25 <sup>th</sup> 2024
3.	Applicants will be notified of the decision on their application for admission to the special class by	November 15 <sup>th</sup> 2024
4.	Applicants must confirm acceptance of an offer of admission by	December 6 <sup>th</sup> 2024

Failure by an applicant to accept an offer by **December 6<sup>th</sup> 2024** may result in the offer being withdrawn.

The Board of Management may accept applications after this date subject to recommendations made by the NEPS Psychologist and the SENCO subject to students meeting the criteria outlined in our Admissions Policy.

**3. Number of places being made available in the 2025/26 school year**

The number of places being made available in 1 <sup>st</sup> year is	144
The number of places being made available in the special classes catering for students with mild and moderate general learning difficulties is.	Mild Class 1 = 4 Moderate Class= 3

**4. Number of places in 1<sup>st</sup> year for the 2025/26 school year which were offered and accepted before 1 February 2020**

The number of places for 1 <sup>st</sup> year that were offered and accepted prior to the coming into operation of section 62 of the Education (Admission to Schools) Act 2018 on 1 February 2020 is	<b>0</b>
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**Date:** November 5<sup>th</sup> 2024

**Date of Review:** June 2025

**Chairperson of the Board of Management:**

*Mary Cagney*

