

**OUR LADY'S SECONDARY SCHOOL**



**ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY POLICY**

## **Our Lady's 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 well-being 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 compassionate.

## **School Context**

Our Lady's Secondary School is a Voluntary Catholic School under the trusteeship of CEIST. The school is Co-Educational and currently has approximately 800 students, over 60 teachers, and a range of ancillary and support staff. The school has a Board of Management comprised of Trustee, Teacher, and Parent Nominees. The Board of Management delegates the day-to-day running of the school to the Principal. The school supports the principles of inclusiveness, equality of access and parental choice in relation to enrolment. In supporting these principles, it also recognises the rights of the Trustees CEIST, the Religious and Educational Philosophy of the Sisters of Mercy and the funding and resources available.

## **Mercy Philosophy of Education**

Inspired by the vision of Catherine McAuley, Mercy Education is committed to holistic development and to achieving the full potential of each student, particularly those who are disadvantaged or marginalised. It is a process informed and influenced by the teaching and example of Jesus Christ and is conducted in an atmosphere of care, respect and joy. Mercy Education is committed to ongoing whole school development in collaboration and partnership with the Board of Management, Staff, Students, Parents/Guardians and the wider community.

## **CEIST Core Values**

The Core Values of CEIST are:

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

## **Assistive Technology Application for Students with Additional Educational Needs**

### **Introduction**

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has a transformative impact on education for students with additional educational needs (AEN). It provides equitable access to the curriculum, enhances the quality of student work, and fosters motivation, leading to improved academic achievement.

At Our Lady's Secondary School, we are committed to ensuring that teachers and students develop the necessary skills and understanding to integrate ICT effectively into learning. Assistive technology, such as laptops or tablets, will be employed to support students where appropriate and viable. These technologies are integrated across the curriculum, tailored to individual needs, and aligned with our goal of optimising learning potential for all students. Additionally, ongoing training and professional development for staff will ensure they can provide the necessary support.

### **Rules for Use**

**Ownership:** Per the Department of Education and Skills (DES) Circular No. 0010/2013, assistive technology provided by the DES remains the school's property. It will be returned to the school when no longer required by the student or upon their departure.

**Parental Agreement:** Parents or Guardians must sign the Assistive Technology Use Agreement Form (Appendix A) before access is granted. Notification of access will be provided in writing.

**Usage Permissions:** The SET Department and School Management will review home use permissions on a case-by-case basis.

**Personal Devices:** Students using personal devices must ensure appropriate anti-virus software is installed and updated regularly.

**Digital Textbooks:** Parents/Guardians are responsible for downloading digital copies of textbooks. The SET Department will provide support if necessary.

**Shared Use:** When not in use by the allocated student, the SET Department may use the device to benefit other students, ensuring priority access for the allocated user.

**Printing:** Students must print homework at home. The school's printing resources are limited and at the discretion of the SET Department and Management.

**Subject Integration:** Subject teachers will be informed of students using assistive technology. Collaboration between teachers, Special Needs Assistants (if applicable), and the SET Department will determine optimal integration.

## **Guidelines and Support for the Use of Laptops (Assistive Technology)**

**Permission and Agreement:** Access is granted only after receipt of the signed Parental/Guardian Agreement Form.

**Software Integrity:** School-provided laptops will have anti-virus software installed and updated as required. Students must not alter any installed software.

**Care and Storage:** Devices must be handled carefully and stored in protective cases when not in use. Students should avoid eating or drinking near the equipment and must not remove identifying labels. Devices should be stored securely in lockers or designated storage areas.

**Charging Responsibility:** Students must ensure their laptops are fully charged at home before school.

**Transportation:** Devices must be carried in a protective case between home and school. If the DES does not provide a case, parents or guardians are responsible for funding it.

**Digital Skills Training:** Additional training will be provided as needed.

**Homework:** Homework completed on laptops must be printed at home, stapled into the appropriate subject copybook, and presented for correction. Loose or USB-stored homework will not be accepted.

**Examinations:** Assistive technology may be used in State Examinations where permitted. The SET Department will submit applications to the State Exams Commission on behalf of eligible students. Strong keyboard skills are critical for examination success, and students must practice regularly.

**Technology Review:** The SET Department and SMT will conduct regular reviews of assistive technology to ensure it remains up-to-date and aligned with current student needs.

**Technical Support:** A dedicated IT support system will be in place to address any issues promptly and efficiently.

**Assistive Software Applications:** Based on individual student needs, the school will explore and provide access to additional assistive software, such as text-to-speech or speech-to-text programs. This decision will be made in consultation with the SMT and SET departments.

## Parental/Guardian Agreement Form

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Student Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Class:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Assistive Technology Granted:**

\_\_\_\_\_

**Access Type:** \_\_\_\_\_

### Terms of Use:

1. The assistive technology remains the property of Our Lady's Secondary School and must be returned upon student departure. All personal data must be removed before return.
2. Parents/Guardians are responsible for the device's damage or loss and must notify the school immediately.
3. The school's IT provider must conduct repairs.
4. Devices are for the student's educational use only.
5. Homework completed on laptops must be printed and stapled into subject copybooks.
6. Anti-virus software must remain installed and operational.
7. Identifier labels must not be removed.
8. Parents/Guardians should monitor the use of devices at home to ensure appropriate usage.
9. Devices must be securely stored when not in use and fully charged before school each day.
10. Parents/Guardians and students should attend, where necessary, an induction session on assistive technology usage and care overseen by a member of the SET Department or a member of Middle Management.
11. Information on VAT refunds for supplementary technology purchases is available at [www.citizensinformation.ie](http://www.citizensinformation.ie).

**Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Ratified by the Board of Management on February 10<sup>th</sup> 2025

Signed: Mary Caffrey (Chairperson B.O.M.) Mary Caffrey

Date: 10<sup>th</sup> February, 2025

Date of Review: February 2027