



## **Admission Policy of St Mary's School**

**Address: Old Court, Rochestown, Cork, T12 PV05**

**Roll number: 19759T**

**School Patron: The Brothers of Charity**

### **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 9<sup>th</sup> June 2021. 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 St Mary'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**

St. Mary's School is a Co-Educational Special School for pupils aged 4-18 years with a Mild General Learning Disability or, with a diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) Mild/Moderate Learning Disability.

## **School Ethos**

The denominational character of the school is Roman Catholic and the Patron body is the Brothers of Charity. The ethos of the school is Christian and in this atmosphere the spiritual, moral, intellectual, social and physical growth of the pupils is nurtured.

Within the context and parameters of Department regulations and programmes, the rights of the Patron as set out in the Education Act 1998, and the funding and resources available, the school supports the principles of:

Inclusiveness,  
Equality of access and participation in the school;  
Parental choice in relation to enrolment;  
Respect for the diversity of values, beliefs, traditions, language and ways of life in society.

St Mary's recognises each student's individual strengths and talents and uses these to promote their learning in areas of identified need. The school's ethos reflects that the holistic development and preparation of life skills for each student is of paramount importance. The school aims to promote independence and personal responsibility, tolerance, enhance self – esteem and well-being and imbue in students respect for people and property and to support all students to reach their full potential.

### **The school has three distinct sections:**

- i) Classes for primary aged children with Mild General Learning Disability.
- ii) Classes for post primary aged students with Mild General Learning Disability
- iii) Classes for primary aged children with a diagnosis of with Autism Spectrum Disorder and a Mild/Moderate Learning Disability.

In each section children are placed in age appropriate classes.

## **3. Admission Statement**

St Mary's 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.

### **Special Schools**

St Mary's School is a school which, with the approval of the Minister for Education and Skills, provides an education exclusively for students with a category or categories of special educational needs specified by the Minister and does not discriminate in relation to the admission of a student who does not have the category of needs specified.

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

St. Mary's Special School with the approval of the Minister for Education and Skills, provides an education exclusively for students with either:

- a) An appropriate professional report confirming a diagnosis of Mild General Learning Disability, with adaptive scores in the Low Range and an IQ standard score of 50 – 70. The report at time of application should be no older than two years and include a recommendation for placement in a Special School for Mild General Learning Disability

or

- b) An appropriate professional report confirming a diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorder and Mild or Moderate General Learning Disability. The report at time of application should be no older than two years and include a recommendation for placement in an ASD specific environment.

#### **5. Admission of Students**

This school shall admit each eligible 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

### **Special School**

St Mary's School provides an education for students with a **Mild General Learning Disability** and also for students with a diagnosis of **Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) with a Mild to Moderate General Learning Disability** and may refuse admission to a student, where the student does not have the professional clinical assessment of the specified category of special educational needs provided for by this school.

A professional report by an appropriately qualified psychologist which states that the applicants needs fall within the designation of their chosen class is an essential basic requirement to support the application.

All decisions on places are contingent on the availability of a suitable vacancy relevant to the educational needs and age of an applicant.

As St. Mary's is a special school, it does not have a particular intake group as many mainstream schools do.

Children are eligible for admission to St. Mary's if they fulfil all of the following criteria-

#### **a) For entry to one of our classes for Mild General Learning Disability:**

Ages 4-18

- if the child has been assessed with a mild general learning disability, and this is the primary diagnosis.
- if the opinion of the Board of Management is that the child's educational and social needs can be met in St Mary's within the existing resource allocation and therefore has the ability to benefit from the education and skills programmes offered in the school
- if they do not have needs beyond the capacity of the school to cater for such as a requirement for highly structured and high support programmes
- The curriculum is broad-based and eclectic in nature and may not be suitable for the needs of pupils who, for example, need highly structured, individualised programmes. Pupils with additional needs will be enrolled provided that the Board of Management can assure the wellbeing, safety and health of all members of the school community can be adequately safeguarded.

**For entry to one of our Autism specific classes:**

- the child has a diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorder and a Mild to Moderate general learning disability (as confirmed by an appropriate professional's report included in the child's application which includes a recommendation for an ASD class and is no older than two years) and therefore has the ability to benefit from the education and skills programmes offered in the school.
- Is of primary school going age on 1<sup>st</sup> of September 2021 (age 4 to 12 in the year of entry)

**Reports to accompany the application**

Before a child is considered for enrolment in St. Mary's the Board of Management will require an up to date (meaning within two years of the date of Application) Psychological Report which indicates the child's primary disability to be that of Mild General Learning Disability or ASD and Mild/Moderate Learning Disability and which outlines the child's needs. The report should state how these needs might be best met in a special school. In the absence of clear recommendations the report may be referred back to the Psychologist for clarification.

Copies of other reports/assessments, where relevant, e.g. medical, psychiatric, speech and language therapy, occupational therapy, social and school reports (including IEPs), must also be made available to the Board of Management as part of the application procedure. Applications will be processed in the first instance by the Admissions Team (Principal & Deputy Principal).

The Principal, or another member of staff designated by the Principal, may contact or visit the prior school of the applicant.

All relevant information will be considered alongside the Psychological Report in assisting the Principal in making a recommendation to the Board of Management. The final decision rests with the Board of Management. Any information thus provided will be retained subject to the usual rules of confidentiality and applicable regulations.

In the admissions process, consideration will be given to ensure that a healthy and safe environment for all students and staff prevails.

Applications submitted by parents/guardians are generally considered only for the particular class they have identified in their application form. However during the application process, the school may advise a parent/guardian that their child is better suited to a different destination class, within the school, based on the child's age, cognitive and adaptive abilities and any other special educational needs of relevance. In this situation, with parent/guardian agreement that application would then be considered for the alternative class.

Class groupings vary from year to year as students leave the school or move to other schools. While the school may choose to move students from one class or section to

another if their needs would be better met, it is not guaranteed and parents do not have a right to have students moved to a class of their choosing.

In calculating how many places a class has, the school will use the pupil teacher ratios for Special classes as set out by the Department of Education.

While recognising the rights of Parent to enroll their child in the school of their choice, the Board of Management has also a responsibility to respect the rights of the school community and in particular the children enrolled. This requires balanced judgements, which are guided by the principles of natural justice and acting in the best interests of the children. Assisting the school in such circumstances, the Board of Management, with due regard for the Patron's wishes, reserves the right to determine the maximum number of children in each separate classroom bearing in mind the needs of each class at the time including:

- The size and available space in classrooms
- The educational needs of children of a particular age
- The presence of children with special educational and or behavioural needs
- The resources available to the school
- The DES maximum class average directives as per SERC ratios
- The needs of the child proposed for enrolment and the impact of the enrolment on the proposed class group.

## 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:

1. The applicant must meet the criteria for enrolment set out in section 4 and 5
2. Qualifying applicants, currently without an offer of a place in a mainstream school, mainstream school special class or a special school for September 2021 and who are confirmed to the NCSE as not having a school placement for September 2021.
3. There must be a space in the appropriate class in line with Department of Education Guidelines for class size and staffing and the BOM decision on whether the school is full. The Board of Management reserves the right to place a cap on the number of pupils in any/all classes. This decision will be guided by :
  1. The needs of the pupils
  2. Considerations of Health & Safety
  3. The availability of the appropriate resources

A pupil or pupils will not be moved from their allocated class group for the purpose of admitting a new pupil after the beginning of the school year.

**The other children will be placed on a waitlist for that year in the eventuality that an appropriate space becomes available during that school year.**

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:

#### **Selection Criteria**

A person, who is independent from the BOM and the applicants, will carry out a lottery draw.

**The lottery draw will also be used to determine the placing of all other remaining eligible applicants on a waitlist for that year, in the eventuality that an appropriate space becomes available during that school year.**

#### **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 (howsoever described) to the school;
- (c) a student's academic ability, skills or aptitude;  
(other than in relation to:
  - admission to (a) a special school or (b) 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;

(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.

This is also subject to the school making offers based on existing waiting lists (up until 31<sup>st</sup> January 2025 only).

## 8. Decisions on applications

All decisions on applications for admission to St Mary's 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
- The clinical evidence that the student has received a diagnosis of a **Mild General Learning Disability** and the recommendation by a psychologist for entry to special school for children with a **Mild General Learning Disability or a diagnosis of ASD and a Mild/Moderate Learning Disability** and the recommendation by a psychologist for entry to special school and requirement for an ASD specific environment.

(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 St Mary's 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.

## **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 the 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.

## **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 certain information between schools in order to facilitate the efficient admission of students. Section 66(6) allows a board 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 St Mary's 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 St Mary's 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.

### **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:

As St Mary's is a Special School, it does not have a particular intake group as many mainstream schools do. Applications may be made to any class throughout the school.

The same admission criteria as stated in section 4 and 5 apply irrespective of the age of the student or the point in the school year at which an admissions decision is made.

#### **Other considerations in this situation:**

Admission of a student to a class other than the school's intake group will be considered on the basis of whether there is a space in the appropriate class.

The Board of Management reserves the right to place a cap on the number of pupils in any/all classes. This decision will be guided by

- The needs of the pupils
- Considerations of Health & Safety
- The availability of the appropriate resources

A pupil or pupils will not be moved from their allocated class group for the purpose of admitting a new pupil after the beginning of the school year.

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:

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 no later than three weeks after the date on which the school received the complete application. Late applicants will be offered a place if there is place available. In the event that there is no place available, the name of the applicant will be added to the waiting list as set out in Section 13.

The same admission criteria as stated in section 4 and 5 apply irrespective of the age of the student or the point in the school year at which an admissions decision is made.

Other considerations in this situation:

Admission of a student to a class other than the school's intake group will be considered on the basis of whether there is a space in the appropriate class

The Board of Management reserves the right to place a cap (below the maximum of 11) on the number of pupils in any/all classes. This decision will be guided by

- The needs of the pupils
- Considerations of Health & Safety
- The availability of the appropriate resources

A pupil or pupils will not be moved from their allocated class group for the purpose of admitting a new pupil after the beginning of the school year.

If a vacancy occurs due to a student leaving the school mid-year, the vacancy will be offered to the next candidate waitlisted for entry to the school.

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

This rule applies to all schools.

The board of St Mary's 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.

**Note:** Exceptions apply only in relation to fee charging post primary schools, the boarding element in Boarding Schools and admission to post leaving cert or further education courses run by post-primary schools.

## **17. Arrangements regarding students not attending religious instruction**

This section must be completed by schools that provide religious instruction to students.

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:

Catholic pupils are prepared for First Holy Communion and Confirmation and attend instruction for that sacrament. Pupils of other faiths remain in the classroom base during this time on other activities under the supervision of staff.

## **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.

The draft policy was circulated to Board members for consideration on **31<sup>st</sup> May 2021** and discussed at a Board of Management Meeting on **10<sup>th</sup> June 2021**.

The draft policy was forwarded to the Patron on **31<sup>st</sup> May 2021** and approved **9<sup>th</sup> June**.

And was formally ratified by a Board meeting on **10<sup>th</sup> June 2021**

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Chairperson of the Board

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

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Principal

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