

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



**School Address: Ashe Road, Nenagh, Co. Tipperary**

**Roll Number: 65380E**

**Registered Charity Number: 20148362**

**School Patron: CEIST (Catholic Education Irish Schools Trust)**

### **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> April 2025. 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 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 St. Mary's Secondary School**

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

In accordance with S.15 (2) (b) of the Education Act, 1998, the Board of Management of St. Mary'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.

St. Mary'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 *CEIST* who began this school is of very significant importance in the life of the school.

As a *CEIST* school, St. Mary'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

St. Mary'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, St. Mary'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. St. Mary'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 St. Mary'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, nonteaching 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**

St. Mary's is a Catholic Secondary School under the Trusteeship of CEIST. It is a Christian Community seeking to promote Gospel values, especially love and freedom, in a dynamic partnership of Students, Staff, Parents, Trustees, Board of Management and the wider community. Respect, for self, for others and for the environment is a core value. In a spirit of loving care and with a commitment to breadth, balance and excellence in education, we seek to develop the full potential of every student: academic, spiritual, moral, physical, cultural, social, emotional, aesthetic and vocational.

### **AIMS**

1. An environment shall be provided in which each student can live out her Christian commitment with opportunities for prayer, worship and a deeper understanding of the Christian way of life.
2. Quality teaching and learning shall ensure strong academic achievement.
3. A warm, friendly, cooperative climate, with mutual respect and a team approach to problem solving, shall be present.
4. Equality, justice, inclusiveness and gender equity shall pervade the school. Special care shall be given to the weak or marginalised.
5. Students shall be prepared for life and for relationships, learning respect for self, for others and for the environment. Talents for the creative use of leisure shall be cultivated.
6. A comprehensive Careers Guidance Service shall facilitate the formation of life goals and career plans.
7. Involvement of Parents, as partners in the education process, shall be welcomed and encouraged.
8. Opportunities shall be provided for the personal/professional development of staff and for the affirmation of their commitment and dedication.

### **3. Admission Statement**

St. Mary'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, gender, '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.

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

St. Mary's Secondary School will comply with any direction served on the board or the patron under section 37A and 67(4)(b).

**Single gender schools**

St. Mary's Secondary School, is an all-girls school and does not discriminate where it refuses to admit a boy applying for admission to this school.

**Post-primary denominational schools**

St. Mary'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 denomination concerned in preference to others.

**All denominational schools**

St. Mary'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 and it is proved that the refusal is essential to maintain the ethos of the school.

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

St. Mary's Secondary School, with the approval of the Minister for Education and Skills, will established a class in September 2025 to provide an education exclusively for autistic students. Applications for enrolment to the special class will be considered where the student meets the following criteria as set by the Department of Education:

- A psychiatrist or psychologist will have assessed and classified such students as having autism or autistic spectrum disorder according to DSM-IV, DSM -V or ICD-10 criteria.
- Recommendation contained in professional report/letter that special class placement is required with rationale for same.
- Evidence of complex educational needs.

Furthermore, it is important to note that where a special class is oversubscribed, the following procedures will apply.

1. In the first instance, the school will seek to confirm that the student meets the criteria to be enrolled in the special class as set out above.
2. When demand exceeds the number of available places, the criteria as set out in Section 6 of this policy will apply.

## 5. Admission of Students

St. Mary's Secondary 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

### **A school that admits students of one gender only**

St. Mary's Secondary School, provides education exclusively for girls and may refuse to admit as a student a person who is not of the gender provided for by this school.

### **All denominational schools**

St. Mary's Secondary School, is a Catholic school and may refuse to admit as a student a person who is not of Catholic denomination where it is proved that the refusal is essential to maintain the ethos of the school.

### **Special education class(es) in St. Mary's Secondary School**

The special class(es) attached to St. Mary's Secondary School provides an education exclusively for autistic students who meet the following criteria as set by the Department of Education:

- A psychiatrist or psychologist will have assessed and classified such students as having autism or autistic spectrum disorder according to DSM–IV, DSM –V or ICD–10 criteria.
- Recommendation contained in professional report/letter that special class placement is required with rationale for same.
- Evidence of complex educational needs.

St. Mary's Secondary 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.

## 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:

### **When demand exceeds the number of available places, the following criteria will apply**

- 1) Siblings of current students**
- 2) Siblings of past pupils**
- 3) Applications from feeder schools in the Nenagh area**
- 4) Applications from students whose parents are past pupils to a maximum of 25% of the available spaces as set out in the school's annual admission notice**
- 5) Applications from all other primary schools.**

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:

**There will be an independent lottery supervised by two members of the Board of Management.**

A waiting list for First Year will be created following the order that students are placed in the lottery.

#### **Special Class Oversubscription**

**In addition to the above, when demand exceeds the number of places available in the special class(es) the following will also apply:**

- **Students who are currently enrolled in St. Mary's Secondary School will be given first preference**

Where required, the Board of Management will maintain separate waiting lists for special class(es) and mainstream enrolment. Each waiting list will be based on the order created by the lottery that is overseen by the Board of Management, as required.

## **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) the payment of fees or contributions (howsoever described) to the school;

(b) 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 and/or

-admission to an Irish language school, in accordance with the provisions of section 62(9) of the act)

(c) the occupation, financial status, academic ability, skills or aptitude of a student's parents;

(d) a requirement that a student, or his or her parents, attend an interview, open day or other meeting as a condition of admission;

(e) 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 criterion 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.

In relation to (2) parents and grandparents 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).

(f) 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 St. Mary'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 13](#) below in relation to applications received outside of the admissions period and [section 14](#) 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 17](#) 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 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 St. Mary'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 9 above.
- (v) The Board of Management has a duty of care of care to ensure, as far as practicable, the Health and Safety of the students and staff of the school. In addition, the Board of Management is required under section 15(1) of the Education Act (1998) to provide, or cause to be provided, an appropriate education for each student at the school for which that Board has responsibility. An application for admission may be refused, therefore, where the admission of the applicant would pose a significant risk to the health and safety of the applicant or students and staff of the school, or risk significantly interfering with the right of other students to an appropriate education.

## **12. Sharing of data with other schools**

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

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

The list may include any or all of the following:

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

### **13. Waiting list in the event of oversubscription**

In the event of there being more applications to the school year concerned than places available, a waiting list of students whose applications for admission to St. Mary'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 St. Mary'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.

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 the 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 at the school, or risk significantly interfering with the right of other students to an appropriate education.

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

A student attending another Second Level School may be enrolled in St. Mary's on condition that:

- a) Such enrolment is in accordance with the School's Admission Policy
- b) The Board of Management is satisfied with the reasons for the transfer and deems the move to be in the Student's best interest and that of other students in the School.
- c) The Principal will invite the student (usually in the presence of her Parent(s)/Guardian(s)) to discuss the transfer.
- d) Admission to St. Mary's is contingent on acceptance by Parent(s)/Guardian(s) (or student, if over 18) of the School's Code of Behaviour.
- e) The Board of Management will delegate responsibility for enrolment of students to the Principal.
- f) The school will reply within 3 weeks of the application.

g) 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 the 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 at the school, or risk significantly interfering with the right of other students to an appropriate education.

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

The board of St. Mary's Secondary School or any persons acting on its behalf shall not, except in accordance with section 64 of the Education (Admission to Schools) Act 2018, 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 opting out of 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 written request is made to the Principal. A meeting will 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 whereby any such agreed arrangements will not result in a reduction in the school day for that/such students.

### **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.