

Admission Policy

Admission Policy of St Mary's Diocesan School

School Address: Beamore Road, Drogheda, Co Louth, A92TF24

Roll number:63841E

School Patron: Bishop of Meath

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 **24th August 2023**. 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 Diocesan School admission process are set out in the school's annual admission notice which is published annually on the school's website at least one week before the commencement of the admission process for the school year concerned.

This policy must be read in conjunction with the annual admission notice for the school year concerned.

The application form for admission is published on the school's website and will be made available in hardcopy on request to any person who requests it.

2. Characteristic spirit and general objectives of the school

St Mary's Diocesan School is a Catholic all boys voluntary secondary school with a Catholic ethos under the trusteeship of the Bishop of Meath.

"Catholic Ethos" in the context of a Catholic voluntary secondary school means the ethos and characteristic spirit of the Roman Catholic Church, which aims at promoting:

- (a) the full and harmonious development of all aspects of the person of the pupil, 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,

and which school provides religious education 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.

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

Mission Statement

St Mary's Diocesan School is a Catholic Secondary School under the trusteeship of the Diocese of Meath and patronage of the Bishop of Meath. The school is committed to the development of the whole person offering equal opportunities to all to achieve their full potential in a familial Christian environment.

The school aspires to an education based on high ideals and a broad curriculum, which will allow our students to confidently play their role in society.

School Resources

The financial, teaching resources and teacher allocation of the school are provided by D.E.S grants, voluntary contributions and fundraising.

The school's ability to implement the school plan and policies must have due regard to the resources and funding available. The school operates within the regulations laid down by the D.E.S. The school follows the curricular programmes prescribed by the D.E.S, which may be amended from time to time, in accordance with section 9 and 30 of the Education Act 1998.

School Details

Principal: Mr Ciaran O'Hare

Deputy Principals: Ms Catherina McNicholas; Ms Cerrie Byrne; Ms Lorraine Noone

Board of Management Members:

Mr Fergus Minogue
Fr. John Conlon
Mrs Liz McNally
Mr James McKeivitt
Mr John Weir
Mr Enda Wynne
Ms Jane Kearney
Ms Rosaleen Brennan

Parents Council: Chairperson: TBC

Student Council: Chairperson: TBC

Curriculum:

- Six Year Programme on offer in a mixed ability setting including Junior Cycle, Transition Year, Leaving Certificate and Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP)

Staff:

Our current staff comprises of 66 teachers, 3 Special Needs Assistants and 8 ancillary staff.

Guidance and Counselling service:

Mindful of the Education Act requirements for students to “have access to appropriate guidance”, St. Mary’s offers a comprehensive Guidance and Counselling service for all students within the limits of the resources allocated by the DES. We have two full time Guidance Counsellors who lead our Student Support Care Team and offer guidance in relation to career and educational opportunities and choices, and who offer a confidential counselling service for students with personal/social problems. The service can be accessed directly by students, or they may be referred to the Counsellor by parents, teachers, tutors, the care team or friends.

When a student is assessed as being in need of referral to external specialist services, parents will be consulted, and referral advice given. In such cases, parental cooperation is expected so that the student will access the help he may need.

School Chaplain:

The role of the Chaplain involves an essentially pastoral ministry to students, staff and families. The Chaplain exercises this ministry through his presence to the school community, through the liturgy, as a member of the schools Religious Education team, the care team and through contact with families and in moments of personal counselling. When it is appropriate the Chaplain will facilitate the organisation of Retreats. The Chaplain will act as a link between the school and the local Catholic community.

Pastoral Care:

Pastoral Care of each pupil, in all aspects of his wellbeing and development is a central principle in the philosophy of St. Mary’s. In addition to a Year Head for each year, a Class Tutor is assigned to each class in the school. The Class Tutor ensures that the welfare of every pupil and his educational progress is looked after. All students have an 8 minute tutor class each morning with their tutor where they can check in with their tutor and take part in our wellbeing programme. Also directly related to Pastoral Care is the work of the Chaplain and Guidance Counsellor and the student support care team – This year comprised of; Principal, Deputy Principals, SEN Dept. Coordinators, Guidance Counsellors and the Wellbeing Coordinator. Our positive discipline system (Green Card Strategy) and Awards Programme acknowledge the achievements and efforts of the students in all areas of school life.

Extra-Curricular Activities:

The promotion and participation of extra-curricular activities is an important element of the school's tradition and ethos and plays an important part in the personal development of all our students. Some of the activities are listed below:

- Debating Teams
- Music Clubs
- Green Schools Committee
- Games Clubs
- Rugby
- GAA
- Soccer
- Basketball
- Athletics
- Badminton
- Golf/Pitch & Putt
- Charity Awareness and projects
- Photography Club
- 100Km Club
- Strength & Conditioning Training

This list is not exhaustive.

Examinations:

Junior Cycle – Mock Examinations in February and Junior Cycle Terminal Exams in June
Leaving Cert - Mock Examinations in February and Leaving Certificate Terminal Exams in June

Parent-Teacher Meetings:

One annual meeting for each year group

Administration Costs:

€120 (Admin. Cost for every subsequent year.)

Voluntary Contribution:

€80per family

Buses:

There may be a charge on the use of buses by students taking part in extra- curricular activities

Uniform:

This consists of: navy trousers, white shirt, school tie, school jumper with crest, black footwear and a navy jacket of thigh length/ fleece with school crest.

3. Admission Statement

St Mary's Diocesan 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.

Single gender schools

St Mary's Diocesan School is an all-boys 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 Diocesan 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 other religious beliefs or none in preference to others.

All denominational schools

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

Schools with special education class(es)

St Mary's Diocesan School does not currently have a special class. If St Mary's Diocesan School does in the future establish a special class, it will do so 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

St Mary's Diocesan School currently has not yet established a special class.

5. Admission of Students

This school shall admit each student seeking admission except where –

- a) the school is oversubscribed (please see [section 6](#) below for further details)
- b) a parent of a student, when required by the principal in accordance with section 23(4) of the Education (Welfare) Act 2000, fails to confirm in writing that the code of behaviour of the school is acceptable to him or her and that he or she shall make all reasonable efforts to ensure compliance with such code by the student

A school that admits students of one gender only

St Mary's Diocesan School provides education exclusively for boys 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 Diocesan School is a Catholic School and may refuse to admit as a student a person who is not of Catholic tradition where it is proved that the refusal is essential to maintain the ethos of the school.

6. Oversubscription

In the event that the school is over-subscribed, 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:

In the event of excess applications for places in First Year which cannot be catered for within the parameters of the DES provisions re class size, staffing provisions and/or accommodation, health, safety and student welfare, the following criteria and outlined in our annual admissions notice, the following in order of priority , for admission will apply for the selection of students:

List A

1. Students who have or have had brothers already enrolled are given first preference (provided they have complied with all conditions outlined in the annual admissions notice and subject to any changes in the Law
2. Students from St Mary's Parish Primary School, Drogheda

Following the inclusion of 1-2 above

List B

Where the number of further applications (provided they have complied with conditions for enrolment as outlined in the annual admissions notice) from other feeder schools – listed in this policy, exceeds the number of places available, the following procedure will apply:

The names of all remaining applications from other feeder schools will be placed in a draw and awarded a place in accordance with the order in which they are drawn until we have allocated the number of places specified in the annual admissions notice.

Names drawn after that number will be placed on a waiting list in the order in which they are drawn and offered a place if it becomes available.

List C

Applications (provided they have complied with conditions for enrolment as outlined in the annual admissions notice) submitted by the closing date from outside our list of feeder schools are welcome but these applications will only be considered where the full complement of places have not been filled by the process above.

The following process will apply: The names of all remaining applications (provided they have complied with conditions for enrolment as outlined in the annual admissions notice, from non- feeder schools will be placed in a draw and awarded a place in accordance with the order in which they are drawn until we have allocated the number specified in the annual admissions notice. Names drawn after that number will be placed on a waiting list in the order in which they are drawn and offered a place if it becomes available. Late Applications (provided they have complied with conditions for enrolment as specified in the annual admissions notice will only be considered when the process outlined above has been exhausted. These will be considered in the order in which they are submitted.

The draws will be officiated by the principal, the chairperson and an independent member of the local community.

List of Primary Schools

Cushenstown National School Cushenstown, Duleek, Co. Meath
Donore National School Donore, Co. Meath
Duleek Boys National School Duleek, Co. Meath
Gaelscoil an Bhradain Feasa Bothar an Mhuilinn, Droichead
Atha, Co. Na Mi
Kentstown National School Kentstown, Co. Meath
Knockcommon National School Knockcommon, Beauparc, Co. Meath
Le Cheile Educate Together NS Mornington Road, Drogheda, Co. Louth
Mount Hanover National School Duleek, Co. Meath
Scoil Aonghusa National School Sunday's Gate, Drogheda, Co. Louth
Scoil an Spioraid Naoimh Laytown, Co. Meath
Scoil Naisiunta Naomh Treasa Bellewstown, Drogheda, Co. Louth
Scoil Realt Na Mara (B) Donacarney, Mornington, Co. Meath
St. Benignus National School Balscadden, Balbriggan, Co. Dublin
St. Mary's National School Bryanstown, Drogheda, Co. Louth
St. Patrick's National School Ardcath, Garristown, Co. Dublin

St. Patrick's National School Stamullen, Co. Meath
St. Patrick's National School Collon Road, Slane, Co. Meath
St. Peter's National School Bolton Square, Drogheda, Co. Louth
Whitecross National School Julianstown, Co. Meath
Yellow Furze National School Beuparc, Navan, Co. Meath
Tullyallen National School, Hill of Rath, Co Louth
Marymount National School, Ballsgrove, Drogheda, Co. Louth.

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:

Insert details of the school's arrangements here

A draw will be made in the event of two or more students are tied for a place.

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:

Points (a) to (g) must be included here by all schools. There are limited exceptions to some of these (highlighted in red below) and schools must retain the exceptions that apply to them and delete those that do not:

- (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 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
- (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 31st January 2025 only).

8. Decisions on applications

All decisions on applications for admission to St Mary's Diocesan School will be based on the following:

- Our school's admission policy
- The school's annual admission notice (where applicable)
- The information provided by the applicant in the school's official application form received during the period specified in our annual admission notice for receiving applications

(Please see [section 14](#) below in relation to applications received outside of the admissions period and [section 15](#) below in relation to applications for places in years other than the intake group.)

Selection criteria that are not included in our school admission policy will not be used to make a decision on an application for a place in our school.

9. Notifying applicants of decisions

Applicants will be informed in writing as to the decision of the school, within the timeline outlined in the annual admissions notice.

If a student is not offered a place in our school, the reasons why they were not offered a place will be communicated in writing to the applicant, including, where applicable, details of the student's ranking against the selection criteria and details of the student's place on the waiting list for the school year concerned.

Applicants will be informed of the right to seek a review/right of appeal of the school's decision (see [section 18](#) below for further details).

10. Acceptance of an offer of a place by an applicant

In accepting an offer of admission from St Mary's Diocesan 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 Diocesan 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 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 Diocesan 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 Diocesan 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:

Where St Mary's Diocesan School is not oversubscribed, all students will be offered a school place subject to the following conditions:

- Parents complete an application form and sign
- The student seeking admission will not have attained at least 12 years of age on the 1st day of January of the school year for which s/he is seeking to be enrolled and has not completed a full course of primary education or the equivalent, as is required under section X of the Department of Education and Skills' Rules and Programme for Secondary Schools 2004/05;
- The Parent fails to confirm in writing that s/he accepts the Student Code of Behaviour and he/she shall make all reasonable efforts to ensure compliance with such code by the Student;

All such applications will be responded to and processed within four weeks.

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 above

The Board of Management also reserves the right to refuse an application in exceptional circumstances which might include an established record of poor behaviour.

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.

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

The board of St Mary's Diocesan 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 students not attending religious instruction

A parent of a student, or a student who has reached the age of 18, who wishes to attend St Mary's Diocesan School without attending religious instruction should make a written request to the Principal. A meeting will be then be arranged with the parent(s) or the student, as the case may be, to discuss how the 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 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.