

Mission Statement

Introduction

Mercy Secondary School, Kilbeggan is a voluntary secondary school established in 1964 by the Sisters of Mercy. In accordance with the foundress of Mercy School, Catherine McCauley, her gospel and legacy, we show a special interest in the poor and disadvantaged.

Mission Statement

Mercy Secondary School Kilbeggan is a Catholic co-educational school committed to the holistic education of all students, to ensure that individually, they each realise their full potential in a social and physical environment that is caring, supportive and joyful. We work in partnership with students, staff, parents and the community, and welcome all students from our multicultural society.

Strategic Aims

- To educate all students to their full potential in every aspect - aesthetic, moral, academic, physical, spiritual, emotional, and social.
- To foster an awareness of the dignity, uniqueness, independence and interdependence of each individual person in a climate of respect and responsibility, with a view to enhancing each individual's self esteem.
- To provide challenges for all students in activities that are stimulating, constructive and rewarding
- To develop the social and physical infrastructure of the school in a positive and progressive manner.
- To build strong and trusting relations between the students, staff, parents and community to ensure that all resources available are used to their optimum
- To develop in students through the Catholic Ethos of the school a sense of stewardship, social responsibility and self that will stay with them beyond their years here to make them full participants in an ever changing world

Admissions Policy

Operating Context

- Mercy Secondary School is a co-educational voluntary secondary school. Procedures for admission are set out having regard for the Education Act 1998, the Education Welfare Act 2000, the Equal Status Act 2000 and the Education for Persons with Special Needs Act 2004. This Admissions Policy is intended to reflect and give full effect to –
 1. The Mission Statement.
 2. The Religious and Educational Philosophy of the Mercy Order.
 3. The parameters of all guidelines, regulations and programmes currently available from the Department of Education and Science
 4. The funding and resources currently made available to the school by the DES and from any other sources.
- It is an objective of the school that it supports the principles of inclusiveness, equality of access and participation in the school, parental choice in relation to enrolment and applications for admission to the school. In this context the school expresses respect for diversity of traditions, values and beliefs within the community it serves today. It is an objective of the school to follow the curricular programmes furnished by the Department of Education and Science.
- Parent(s)/Guardian(s) seeking admission of their children to the school are invited to carefully read this Policy.

Decision Making Process

- Mercy Secondary School, Kilbeggan draws the bulk of its student population from its immediate catchment area and primary feeder schools named below. Secondary school students must be aged 12 on the 1st January in the calendar year following the child's entry into 1st Year. Birth certificates must be provided.
- The number of new students to be accepted in any given year is based on the allocation of resources. Due to the Department of Education and Science class regulations size, our first year enrolment will not normally exceed 96 students.
- If the number of applications received in the period from the last Thursday in January to the first Wednesday in February inclusive, of the school year in question, exceeds the number of places available, then a set of ranked criteria shall apply. This ranked criteria, numbered 1 – 7, sets out the order of priority to be given to different categories of applicants.
- If at any stage in the process, the number of applicants in the category to whom priority is being given exceeds the number of places remaining, places shall be distributed on a lottery basis to the applicants in the category .
- When all the places have been filled, then a waiting list shall be created under the remaining ranked criteria, using a lottery to decide on the order of applicants within each category.
- The ranked criteria which sets out the order of priority to be applied are as follows
 1. Siblings of present or past students of the school.
 2. Sons and daughters of current staff members.
 3. Sons and daughters of past students
 4. Applicants attending the feeder schools named below
 5. Applicants resident in the catchment area as defined by the VEC Transport. Scheme.
 6. Applicants resident in the catchment area, who have applied outside the specified enrolment time, up to and including the date of the lottery.
 7. Applicants who do not fall into any of the above categories
- Any applications received after the above shall be put on a supplementary waiting list in the order that they apply.
- Siblings (ie. twins/triplets/siblings within a family group) – when a twin sibling is drawn in a lottery, then the other twin shall automatically be offered the next available place – up to and including the second last place. If a sibling is drawn for the last remaining place, then the other sibling shall be offered the first place on the waiting list.
- Parents/Guardians shall sign a statement confirming that all information supplied is true and accurate. Failure to do so may result in the offer of a place being rescinded. The Board of Management reserves the right to verify the information supplied.
- Applicants shall be notified in advance, as to the category of their application before any lottery may take place.
- Only applicants' parents/guardians shall attend the lottery.
- The lottery shall be conducted by means of a draw of numbers rather than names and these numbers will be drawn from a drum.

Enrolment Procedure

- In December a letter is sent to the Principal of each of our feeder primary schools requesting the names of possible students due to enroll in the school for the following September.

Primary Feeder Schools:

Ballinagore	Kilbeggan
Boher	Loughnavalley
Castletown-Geoghegan	Rahugh
Dalystown	Rosemount
Durrow	Streamstown
Dysart	Tyrrellspass
Horseleap	

Notification

- In January the Principal visits each of the Primary schools above with details of Open Night & Enrolment /Assessment Day. These events normally take place in the last Thursday of January and the following Saturday, respectively. Enrolment forms and School Prospectus are available from the school office and are distributed on Open Night. Details of dates, etc. are notified to the local media, churches and to feeder primary schools.
- Parents/Guardians may enrol students in the period from the last Thursday in January to the first Wednesday in February inclusive of the school year in question. Any applications outside these dates will be subject to the terms of the School's Admissions Policy.
- The school operates a "mixed ability" class placement policy and student assessment details are only used to assist in the identification of possible learning difficulties and to indicate particular learning aptitudes which students may have. These subsequently inform parents, students and teachers when subject choices are being made. Composition of classes can be revised as class numbers allow. In March/April, primary school Principals and teachers of 6th class are visited and details regarding student needs and aptitudes are discussed in light of test results, application forms and previous details which parents/guardians have supplied.
- The Department of Education & Science is appraised of the potential educational needs of incoming students and appropriate resources are requested.
- In April/May a meeting of parents/guardians of incoming students is held. Members of the Care Team in the school attend this meeting, i.e. Learning Support, Guidance, and school Policies and Procedures are discussed.

Right of Board of Management to Refuse Application

- The Board of Management reserves the right to refuse to enrol an applicant if it is of the opinion that the presence of the applicant in the school would be detrimental to the interests of other parties to the school. Among the grounds for such refusal might be:-
 - The lack of resources and /or capacity within the school to cater for the needs of the applicant.
 - The belief on the part of the BOM that the application will be a threat to the health and safety of others or the religious ethos of the school.
- The BOM, in making such a decision, will balance the rights and needs of the applicant with the rights and needs of the general school community.
- In the event of an application for enrolment being brought before the Board of Management its decision will be made in accordance with the school's Admissions Policy. Its decision will be communicated to parents within 21 days, as prescribed by the Minister under the Education Act. Parents have the right under Section 29 of the Education Act to appeal a refusal by the school to enrol a student. In the event of refusal, a letter is sent to parents/guardians refusing admission/enrolment. The right to appeal the refusal is restated and an application form is made available.
- Mercy Secondary School, Kilbeggan is guided by the Education Act 1998. The Education Welfare Act 2000 and the Equal Status Act 2000 and supports the principles of equality of access and participation contained in this legislation. Mercy Secondary School, Kilbeggan respects the concept of parental choice in relation to enrolments and respects the diversity of traditions, values, beliefs, languages and ways of life which exist in society.
- Subject to the above considerations, Mercy Secondary School, Kilbeggan accepts all applicants whose educational needs can be met within its' resources.

Special Educational Needs

- Mercy Secondary School welcomes students with special needs and will use the resources, both financial and personnel, provided by the Department of Education and Science to make reasonable accommodation for students with disabilities or special educational needs up to a nominal cost so that these students are free to participate in the life in the school in so far as is reasonably practicable.
- While recognising and fully supporting parents' rights to have a school of their choice for their children, the School's ability to accept students with particular needs is dependent on the supply of resources, suitable to the needs of the individual student, being supplied by the Department of Education and Science.

- The school welcomes applications from students with special educational needs unless the nature and degree of those needs is such that to enrol the student concerned would be inconsistent with both the best interests of the student concerned and the effective provision of education for the other students with whom the student concerned is to be educated.
- The Board of Management must be made aware of any special needs as early as possible, so that these needs can be assessed and addressed where possible.
- Parents are requested to outline the details of a child's special educational needs on the Application Form
- The Board of Management, having gathered all relevant information and professional documentation, assesses how the needs of these students can be met. Contact will be made with the National Council for Special Educational Needs regarding special needs resources to which the student may be entitled e.g. Special Needs Assistant, specialised equipment/furniture transport etc.
- The Principal may request a meeting with the parents of the student to discuss the application and the student's needs. The parents of the student may request a meeting with the Principal to discuss the student's educational or other needs. N.B. It may take some time for the Department of Education and Science to process such applications. Parents are strongly advised to inform the School as early as possible and discuss their particular situation well in advance of making application.
- As soon as is practicable, but not later than 21 days, after a parent/guardian has provided all the relevant information, the Board of Management shall make a decision in respect of the application concerned and inform the parents/guardians in writing thereof. (Education Welfare Act (Section 19 (3)).
- The school reserves the right to refuse enrolment to any student in very exceptional situations. Such a very exceptional situation could include the following:
 1. The student has special needs such that, even with additional resources available from the Department of Education and Science, the school cannot meet such needs and/or provide the student with an appropriate education or
 2. In the opinion of the Board of Management, the student poses an unacceptable risk to other students, to school staff or to school property.

Transfers from Other Schools

- Applications for enrolment involving transfer from another school may only be made at the start of the school year. Applications will be accepted subject to the following –
 1. The terms of the School's Admissions Policy.
 2. The school being satisfied with the reasons for transfer.
 3. The availability of places.
 4. Information being made available from the student's former/present school concerning attendance, discipline, educational progress, disabilities, special needs, etc
 5. Meeting with the pupil and their parents/guardians.
 6. Subject choice considerations.
 7. Health and Safety Considerations.
 8. Resources available for the student
 9. The completion of a special application form for students who wish to transfer.
 10. Consultation with the Educational Welfare office where appropriate.
- The schools acceptance of an application will always have regard to a student's best interests, i.e. the consequences for the student of mid-year transfer, subject choices, available space and predefined class size.
- Subject to the above conditions Mercy Secondary School, Kilbeggan operates an open Admissions Policy based on the acceptance by parents/guardians and students of the school's Code of Discipline

Students who are Suspended or Expelled from Another Post Primary School

A student who has either been suspended or expelled from another Post-Primary school and who wishes to be considered for a place at Mercy Secondary School Kilbeggan shall prior to the consideration of any such application take the following steps:-

- a) Request an Application Form from the school.
- b) Complete the said Application Form fully and provide such details or documentation as may be requested by the school.
- c) Complete an interview in the company of the parent(s)/guardian(s).
- d) The parent(s)/guardian(s) shall be required to require and furnish to Mercy Secondary School a copy of the student's school records, psychological reports and any other relevant documentation and furnish same to Mercy Secondary School prior to any application being considered. Before the application is considered for enrolment of the student in the school the educational needs of the student's must be outlined to Mercy Secondary School
- e) A copy of all written communication between the school from which the student was either suspended or expelled. A copy of reports or decision as a consequence of any disciplinary hearing at the school from which the student was either suspended or expelled.

Further in respect of such application the following shall apply:-

1. The Board of Management reserves the right to refuse an application for admission. This decision shall be reached having considered the documentation and subsequent to the conclusion of the application procedures set out by the school.
2. Where the Board of Management is of the view that the student is a danger to the safety and welfare of other students or staff it may decline to accept the student.
3. The final decision to admit a student who has been expelled from another school shall rest with the Board of Management of Mercy Secondary School. The school shall be mindful in reaching this decision of the needs and requirements of existing students and staff together with the availability of resources. In reaching this conclusion the Board of Management shall be mindful of its legal obligations to maintain discipline and safety within the school. The Board shall also be mindful in reaching this decision to consider and to ensure that good order and discipline are maintained in the school and that the safety of students and staff is secured.
4. Regarding students who are suspended or expelled from another school the Board of Management shall have regard to its obligation to enable each student within the school to learn well and develop his or her full potential as a student and as a citizen while having regard to the characteristic spirit of the school

Admission to Senior Cycle

- Students who have completed the Junior Programme in Mercy Secondary School may progress to the Senior Cycle.
- A 5th Year Programme is available to all with Transition Year optional.

Transition Year Option available subject to the following criteria

- Formal Application Process.
- School Attendance Record
- School Behaviour Record
- Places Available
- Students must contract to participate in all activities of the programme
- Students who do not actively and wholeheartedly engage in the programme may not be allowed to continue

Repeat Students for all Years

- There are no reserved places for repeating
- Priority is given to past pupils of Mercy Secondary School who wish to repeat
- Selection criteria operates on a first come first served basis taking into account –
 - (i) subject choice considerations
 - (ii) reasons for repeating
 - (iii) places available
- The school will then decide on the application having consulted with staff
- Department of education Constraints

Code of Behaviour

Mercy Secondary School aims to provide an educational environment where our students can develop a mature understanding of themselves and others and can develop to their full potential in every aspect of their education – moral, academic, social, aesthetic, physical and spiritual.

Respect for All

- All members of the school community should have respect towards one another.
- Students should show respect at all times for teachers, staff members, parents, fellow students and themselves.
- A trustful and respectful school atmosphere facilitates the positive teaching and learning of all.
- Students must be polite at all times and understand that fighting, bad language and rough behaviour shows serious disrespect and are not tolerated.
- Insulting/offensive remarks are treated very seriously.
- Bullying will not be tolerated and will be dealt with in a fair, firm and understanding manner.

Attendance and Punctuality.

Regular attendance is essential for effective progress at school. The school day is divided into nine class periods from Monday to Thursday and six class periods on Friday. School begins at 9am sharp and ends at 3:50pm, 1:10pm on Friday. Morning break is from 11am to 11:10am. Lunch break is from 1:10pm to 1:50pm.

Students must not leave school grounds during school hours without the permission of the Principal or Deputy Principal. If a student has to leave during school hours a written request is necessary. Students who wish to go home for lunch may do so provided they have fully completed, signed and returned to the school a special form available from the school for this purpose.

Following any absence, students must supply a note of explanation signed by a parent/guardian to explain that absence. These notes will be kept on file within the school. The Education Welfare Board will be informed of the names of students who are absent 20 days in any school year or are absent for prolonged periods without explanation.

School Property and Personal Property.

Any damage to school property must be reported immediately. Students may be requested to pay for such damage. Students are responsible for their own property at all times. Clothing and books should be clearly marked. The school is not responsible for loss of personal property.

In everybody's interest, the school is kept clean and tidy at all times.

Smoking and chewing gum are forbidden. Smoking in any part of the school building or its environs is banned; students should not smoke while in uniform. Smoking is also banned on any school-related activity (Public Health (Tobacco) Act 2004).

Mobile phones must be switched off between 9am and 3:50pm with the exception of morning break and lunchtime. Any student needing to use a phone may report to the office for assistance. A student found using a mobile phone in class will have the phone confiscated by the teacher and passed on the Principal or Deputy Principal. Phones will only be returned to parents who must collect them at the school. The use of picture or sound recording mobile phones is strictly forbidden.

Mobile Phones/Internet Use

As you are aware the use of internet and mobile phones can be invaluable. However, these technologies can also be misused causing offence and harm to others. The making of nuisance phone calls, the sending of unwanted text messages/e-mails/or posting offensive messages is defined as harassment under the law. It is contrary to the school's Dignity in the Workplace Charter, it's Anti-Bullying Policy and Code of Behaviour. Inappropriate behaviour and breach of any of these policies will result in serious disciplinary action up to and including exclusion from school in accordance with procedure.

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Uniform.

Students are expected to be neat and tidy at all times. There is agreement between parents, pupils and teachers to have a school uniform. All students must wear the full school uniform throughout the school day and on the way to and from school.

The wearing of facial jewellery/body piercing items will not be tolerated. Such jewellery poses a risk to the health and safety of our students. In the interests of safety, the wearing of larger earrings is not permitted.

Black shoes/black runners must be worn when in uniform.

All items of clothing and particularly sports wear must be clearly marked with owner's name. Primary responsibility for personal property rests with the student.

Learning and Teaching

- Attention to class-work and homework underpins all educational success.
- Students are expected to be prepared for class and have the appropriate texts and material with them at all times. They are expected to respect the opinions of others and be polite in expressing their own opinion.
- Students must co-operate fully with teachers' guidance.
- Homework assignments must be carefully recorded in students' journals, as provided.

Sanctions

Sanctions for unacceptable behaviour include the following: -

- Extra Class-work.
- Verbal warning.
- Class Report.
- Referral to Year Head
- Referral to Deputy Principal.
- Detention.
- Weekly Report.
- Phone-call home.
- Referral to Principal.
- Meeting with Parents by appointment.
- Suspension.

Suspension

Students may be recommended for suspension from school for: -

- Ongoing poor behaviour.
- Verbal abuse of any person in the school community.
- Physical abuse of any person in the school community.
- Theft of or deliberate damage of property.
- Fighting/bullying.
- Persistent punctuality problems.

Any student who is suspended will be reported to the Board of Management. Parents/Guardians have the right to appeal a decision to suspend their son/daughter to the Board of Management.

Expulsion

A student may be recommended for expulsion in the following circumstances:-

- Where there is ongoing refusal by a student to abide by the regulations of the school.
- Serious physical or verbal assault of any person in the school community.
- Wilful and serious damage to school property.
- Having, passing, selling or taking illegal substances in the school or at school activities. This will automatically be reported to the Board of Management for consideration and the local Gardaí will be informed.

Signed: _____
(Parent)

Signed: _____
(Student)

Disciplinary Procedure

- Step 1:** Class Teacher.
Classroom Sanctions.
Class Report.
- Step 2:** Green Referral Form to Year-head.
Year-head meets with Student.
Sanctions imposed.
Student records the incident in their own words and signs in an effort to encourage personal responsibility.
Student writes a signed apology and presents it to the Teacher
- Step 3:** 2nd Referral to Year-head.
As Step 2.
Year-head sends a letter to Parent/Guardian to indicate that student has been referred twice and should matters not improve a referral will be made to the Deputy Principal and the Student will be on full School Report.
- Step 4:** 3rd Referral to Year-head.
Year-head indicates 3rd Referral on Green Form, therefore the matter is referred on to the Deputy Principal.
The Deputy Principal meets with the Student and places him/her on School Report.
Imposes Sanctions.
A letter and copy of School Report are sent to Parent/Guardian at the end of the week.
- Step 5:** 4th Referral to Year-head.
Referred on to Deputy Principal and then Principal immediately.
Principal imposes severe sanction.
Suspension for 2 days.
Parent/Guardian is informed of suspension by a letter that indicates that they are free to make an appointment with the office and welcome to meet with the School Counsellor.
Upon returning to school the student signs a Letter of Intent whereby they pledge to improve their behaviour.
- Step 6:** 5th Referral to Year-head.
Year-head indicates 5th Referral on Green Form, therefore the matter is referred on to the Deputy Principal.
The Deputy Principal meets with the Student and refers him/her immediately to Principal who places Student on School Report.
A letter and copy of School Report are sent to Parent/Guardian at the end of the week.
- Step 7:** Further Referral to Year-head.
Student meets Tribunal of Deputy and Year-head.
A detailed report is supplied to the Principal and a copy to file.
Subsequently the Principal suspends the student for a longer period of 3 to 4 days.
Upon returning to school the student signs a new Letter of Intent.
- Step 8:** Further Referral to Year-head.
The matter is directly passed on to the Principal.
5 day suspension is imposed until Board of Management Meeting.
Parents are informed of the date of that meeting and invited to attend.
The Principal gives a full and detailed account of the Student's record to the Board and recommends sanctions up to and including exclusion to that meeting

In keeping with our Code of Behaviour, Pastoral Care Policy and Mission Statement, our School Counsellor is available to any student who may require assistance.

Anti-Bullying Policy

Statement of Intent

We are committed to providing a caring, friendly and safe environment for all of our students so they can learn in a relaxed and secure atmosphere. Bullying of any kind is unacceptable at our school. If bullying does occur, all students should be able to tell and know that incidents will be dealt with promptly and effectively. We are a *TELLING* school. This means that *anyone* who knows that bullying is happening is expected to tell the staff.

What Is Bullying?

Bullying is the use of aggression with the intention of hurting another person. Bullying results in pain and distress to the victim.

Bullying can be:

- Emotional being unfriendly, excluding, tormenting (e.g. hiding books, threatening gestures)
- Physical pushing, kicking, hitting, punching or any use of violence
- Racist racial taunts, graffiti, gestures
- Sexual unwanted physical contact or sexually abusive comments
- Homophobic because of, or focussing on the issue of sexuality
- Verbal name-calling, sarcasm, spreading rumours, teasing
- Cyber All areas of internet ,such as email & internet chat room misuse
Mobile threats by text messaging & calls
Misuse of associated technology , i.e. camera & video facilities

Why is it Important to Respond to Bullying?

Bullying hurts. No one deserves to be a victim of bullying. Everybody has the right to be treated with respect. Pupils who are bullying need to learn different ways of behaving.

Schools have a responsibility to respond promptly and effectively to issues of bullying.

Objectives of this Policy

- All teaching and non-teaching staff, students and parents should have an understanding of what bullying is.
- All teaching and non-teaching staff should know what the school policy is on bullying, and follow it when bullying is reported.
- All students and parents should know what the school policy is on bullying, and what they should do if bullying arises.
- As a school we take bullying seriously. Pupils and parents should be assured that they will be supported when bullying is reported.
- Bullying will not be tolerated.

Signs and Symptoms

A student may indicate by signs or behaviour that he or she is being bullied. Adults should be aware of these possible signs and that they should investigate if a student:

- doesn't want to go on the school / public bus
- begs to be driven to school
- changes their usual routine
- is unwilling to go to school (school phobic)
- begins to truant
- becomes withdrawn anxious, or lacking in confidence
- starts stammering
- attempts or threatens suicide or runs away
- feels ill in the morning
- begins to do poorly in school work
- comes home with clothes torn or books damaged
- has possessions which are damaged or " go missing"

- asks for money or starts stealing money (to pay bully)
- has dinner or other monies continually "lost"
- has unexplained cuts or bruises
- comes home starving (money / lunch has been stolen)
- becomes aggressive, disruptive or unreasonable
- is bullying other students or siblings
- stops eating
- is frightened to say what's wrong
- gives improbable excuses for any of the above
- is afraid to use the internet or mobile phone
- is nervous & jumpy when a cyber message is received

These signs and behaviours could indicate other problems, but bullying should be considered a possibility and should be investigated

Procedures

1. Report bullying incidents to staff
2. In cases of serious bullying, the incidents will be recorded by staff
3. In serious cases parents should be informed and will be asked to come in to a meeting to discuss the problem
4. If necessary and appropriate, guards will be consulted
5. The bullying behaviour or threats of bullying must be investigated and the bullying stopped quickly
6. An attempt will be made to help the bully (bullies) change their behaviour

Outcomes

- 1) The bully (bullies) may be asked to genuinely apologise. Other consequences may take place.
- 2) In serious cases, suspension or even exclusion will be considered
- 3) If possible, the students will be reconciled
- 4) After the incident / incidents have been investigated and dealt with, each case will be monitored to ensure repeated bullying does not take place.

Prevention

The following are some of the methods we will adopt:

- writing a set of school rules
- signing a behaviour contract
- writing stories or poems or drawing pictures about bullying
- reading stories about bullying or having them read to a class or assembly
- making up role-plays
- having discussions about bullying and why it matters

Anti-Bullying Code

- Mercy Secondary School is a caring community. Our school community acknowledges and respects the uniqueness, the equality and the rights of each pupil.
- Our school community has the responsibility to make all our pupils feel safe, secure and happy, in class, on the corridor or wherever, taking part in any school activity.
- In our school, pupils should, at all times, be free from fear, intimidation and any form of bullying.
- We say a pupil is being bullied, when another pupil, or group of pupils, say nasty and unpleasant things to him/her. It is also bullying when, for example, a pupil is hit, threatened, teased repeatedly, sent nasty notes or text messages, or when no one ever talks to them.
- Bullying causes hurt and unhappiness. Mercy Secondary School does not tolerate bullying.
- When bullying happens, we support each other best by telling someone who will help.
- **We Deal Seriously With Bullying In Our School!**

Attendance & Punctuality

- Any student who is absent from school must return with a note of explanation, signed by parents/guardians. This is a Department of Education & Science regulation. School records must be sent to the Education Welfare Board each term.
- Any student who is late, either morning or afternoon must report to office and get a Late Slip to present to the subject teacher. This will be signed at the office.
- A student will not be permitted to enter class without this slip.
- A record of lateness is kept on duplicate forms for reference.
- If a student does not present for first class he/she is marked absent for the day and will be asked for a note of explanation for same.
- Students who are late will be detained at lunchtime on specified dates.
- All letters of explanation relating to punctuality and attendance must be signed by parents/guardians and presented to the office.
- All such notes will be filed accordingly.

Insurance Implications of Delivering and Collecting pupils.

- The school will open to receive pupils at 8:55am.
- No responsibility is accepted for pupils arriving before that time.
- Classes will commence each day at 9:00am.
- Classes will end each day at 3:40pm (1:10pm Friday).
- School will not accept responsibility for pupils after 3:45pm (1:15pm Friday).
- Parents who are taking pupils home by car please note that the school cannot accept responsibility for looking after pupils after 3:45pm (1:15pm Friday).
- For those staying in for Study, Art, Games Practice or other school related activities, the school cannot accept responsibility for their safety any later than five minutes after the end of classes/training.

Schools Personal Accident Insurance.

- We strongly advise each student to take out this insurance at €10 per student for the year. This provides 24 hour cover for each student.

Health & Safety

Student Responsibilities Towards Health & Safety

- Each student is expected to contribute towards a safe and secure environment for all.
- Students must read and obey the Health & Safety regulations posted throughout the school.
- Students must always move in an orderly fashion.
- Students must never leave the school grounds without the express permission of the school authorities.
- Students must not interfere with, or damage fire equipment, safety equipment or safety signs.
- Bullying or aggressive behaviour by a student towards another student will constitute serious misconduct and will be treated accordingly.
- Specific guidelines for the Woodwork, Metalwork, Technical Graphics, Home Economics, Science, Art, Music, Computers and PE Departments must be followed to govern the safe use of equipment.
- Smoking or the use of lighters/ matches is strictly forbidden.
- Each student shares responsibility for cleanliness in the following areas – classroom, toilets, cloakroom, dining hall, corridors and the school yard.
- Students must label all their personal belongings, which may be stored in the school buildings at any time – the school management does not accept responsibility for property left unattended or not stored in lockers.

- Students must store school bags in a safe place to allow for free movement. Passageways or exits must not be obstructed.
- Students should follow these Health & Safety guidelines even when they are off site on school trips, work experience etc.

Student Illness

- It is preferable that a student who is ill would remain at home due to the risk of infection.
- If a student is ill in school, s/he must remain in class where possible. If s/he is too unwell to remain in class s/he must report to the Principal's office where a parent will be contacted and advised to bring the student home. A parent must sign the student out before bringing them home.

Fire Safety

- Students must never behave in a way that endangers the safety of any person in the school.
- It is the responsibility of each student to familiarise themselves and to comply with fire notices and the fire drill. Fire drills will take place twice yearly, and whenever the Fire Alarm signal is given, the presumption is that an emergency exists.
- The fire drill instructions given by the teacher are to be strictly adhered to. Students on hearing the fire alarm exit the designated exit from their classroom to assemble in the school field with their teacher. All belongings should be left behind.
- Students are to remain in the school field until requested to return to the classroom under the direction of their teacher.
- Interference with the fire-fighting equipment or the fire alarm system is a serious offence and will be dealt with accordingly.

Substance Abuse Policy

Introduction

At Mercy Secondary School, Kilbeggan, the Management and School Staff are dedicated to the care of the whole school community. We strive to provide a safe and secure environment for learning.

Goals/Rationale

This Policy applies to the entire school community, including Teachers, Students, Parents/Guardians and users of the school buildings.

It is important to stress that while not all young people are using substances, all young people are living in a substance-using society. Therefore, in order to meet the needs of our students, we must prepare and implement a Substance Abuse Policy. Furthermore, we need to provide consistency in responding to incidents, if they arise and, most importantly, we need to promote a Substance-Abuse-Free School.

Policy Content

(a) Education for all School Members

Education about alcohol, tobacco and drugs will be introduced under the broader context of the S.P.H.E. Programme, which in turn is developed and delivered in the context of a supportive whole school environment. We need to be clear about what a drug is. A drug is any chemical which alters how the body works, or how the person behaves or feels. Education will take place through specific modules and programmes in S.P.H.E., as in existing subjects, e.g. science, religion and through special projects (e.g. T.Y.). The use of outside visitors/speakers will be incorporated to enhance the work done in class. This will take place on separate occasions, first with parents/guardians in the form of an information night and then the students as part of the school day. This integrated community-based approach is required if the Policy is to be effective.

Education on healthy lifestyles is also incorporated and the students are encouraged to participate and get involved in sporting and other extra-curricular activities during their time in the school.

Training of staff would be seen as essential in identifying potential problems and would be introduced again in the form of an Information Day run by outside experts. This training would be complimented and supported by School Management and the S.P.H.E. Team.

(b) Management of Alcohol, Tobacco and Drug Related Incidents

This school does not condone the misuse of **legal or illegal** substances on school premises or school activities but our policy is to put the young person's welfare first. Under the Tobacco Control Act 2003, smoking is now illegal in any public place. Students found **smoking** in school will meet with their Principal or Deputy Principal. The students will then be subject to disciplinary sanctions as set out in the school's Code of Behaviour.

Alcohol may not be brought into the school or used while involved in school activities, except with the permission of the Principal. In the event of a student misusing alcohol the parents/guardians will be informed and appropriate action taken to promote the young person's welfare. Misuse of alcohol by any member of the school community in/on school grounds is prohibited.

Signs of misuse of other substances are easily confused with other problems; particularly those associated with adolescence. It is important not to jump to conclusions. Our Policy is to discuss students' problems sympathetically to find out the extent of the problem, explain the limits of confidentiality and establish what help the student needs. A teacher suspecting substance misuse should discuss this with the Principal. If there is evidence that a student is misusing substances the teacher must inform the Principal, who will contact the parents. If it seems that **illegal substances** are being brought into school, the school can discuss this with the Juvenile Liaison Officer, An Garda Síochána or the Health Board. If illegal substances are found, the Principal will pass them on the Gardaí to prevent an offence being committed. The Gardaí will be informed if illegal drugs are used or sold in school.

Any student attending school with any form of medication must inform the Principal of this in writing

(c) Evaluation

Evaluation of school policy is essential if it is to continue to meet the needs of future students. It can act as an awareness raising exercise in the school and enables some measurement of the change resulting from implementing a new or revised drug policy in the school.

Smoke-Free Workplace Policy

Rationale:

Exposure to second-hand/Environmental Tobacco Smoke (ETS) also known as passive smoking is a cause of disease, including lung cancer and heart disease, in third parties. Neither the simple separation of smokers and non-smokers within the same airspace nor the provision of ventilation can eliminate exposure to ETS and the consequent health effects of such exposure. This policy has been developed to protect all employees, service users, customers and visitors from exposure to ETS, to ensure compliance with legal obligations and to ensure a safe working environment.

Policy

It is the policy of Mercy Secondary School that all of its workplaces are smoke-free and that all employees have a right to work in a smoke-free environment. Smoking is prohibited within the entire school boundary with no exceptions. This policy applies to all employees, consultants, contractors, customers and visitors. In the school context this also applies to students and parents.

Implementation

Overall responsibility for policy implementation rests with the Board of Management. All staff have an obligation to adhere to, and facilitate the implementation of this policy. The person in charge (Principal) shall inform all existing employees, consultants and contractors of the policy and their role in the implementation and monitoring of the policy. All new and prospective employees, consultants and contractors shall be given a copy of the policy on recruitment/induction by the Principal. Students and parents will be informed of this policy.

Infringements

Infringements by staff will be dealt with under local disciplinary procedures. Infringements by customers, clients etc., will be dealt with in accordance with the procedure set out below. Employees, consultants, contractors, customers and visitors who contravene legislation prohibiting smoking in the workplace are also liable to a criminal prosecution with an associated fine.

Procedure if a person smokes in contravention of Section 47 of the Public Health (Tobacco) Acts that prohibits smoking in the workplace.

1. The person's attention is drawn to the "No Smoking" signs and advised that they are committing an offence by smoking on the premises.
2. The person is advised that it is also an offence for the Board of Management to permit anyone to smoke in contravention of the law.
3. The person is advised that the school has a smoke-free policy to ensure a safe working environment for employees and students.
4. If the person continues to smoke they will be advised that they are in breach of school rules and that disciplinary sanctions will have to be implemented.
5. Violation of the smoke free policy will invoke disciplinary procedures. Action will be in line with the procedures used for violation of any other health and safety procedure in the school.
6. Violation of the smoke-free policy by non-school personnel (e.g. visitors, contractors, suppliers) should be dealt with in accordance with the DES circular 18/99 Guidelines on Violence in Schools.

School Uniform

Girls Uniform

Skirt:	Plaid with 2 inverted pleats front and back, knee length Ref. No. 15274
Trousers:	Navy Blue Trousers (uniform only) Optional, available from G & T Drapery only
Jumper:	30% Wool, 70% Acrylic Jumper. Round Neck with Crest.
Shirt:	Blue
Socks:	Navy Blue Knee High / Navy Opaque Tights.
Shoes:	Black Flat Shoes.
Jacket/ Hoodie	Navy, available from the school only (€60/€30)

Boys Uniform

Trousers:	Navy Blue Trousers (uniform only)
Jumper:	30% Wool, 70% Acrylic Jumper. Round Neck with Crest.
Shirt:	Blue
Socks:	Navy Socks.
Shoes:	Black Shoes.
Jacket/ Hoodie	Navy, available from the school only (€60/€30)

Boys must be clean shaven.

Footwear: Black flat footwear must be worn.

Earrings: Discreet earrings are permitted. No other body piercing is permitted.

**It is important that all students wear full school uniform. It is only supplied from the following outlet:- G. & T. Drapery, Corn Loft, Patrick Street, Tullamore, Co. Offaly.
Tel: (057) 9323700**

Lockers

Student lockers will be available to all students on return in September. The following is the procedure which will operate in relation to these lockers: -

- Locker keys will cost €5 per student, payable to the teacher in charge of that locker, see below.
- €5 per key per student.
- Teacher keeps one key.
- Student receives one key. If key is lost the student must pay €5 and receive a second key (there will be a delay). Subsequent keys cost €7.50.
- Students receiving lockers must agree that these lockers may be opened by Form Tutor, Deputy Principal or Principal at any time.
- Students must be responsible for the upkeep of their lockers.
- Students may go to lockers only before class at 9am, at the 11am break, at lunch break and after class at 3:40pm. Student may not go to lockers between other classes. Breaches of this rule will mean that the student will forfeit the use of locker for the remainder of the term. (The exception of this rule applies to P.E. classes only.)

Student Book Rental Scheme

Mercy Secondary School has operated a very successful Text Book Rental Scheme over the past number of years. This has been of great benefit in that it ensures that all students can have their full set of books in the first week back to school and helps parents regarding finance demands. The cost of book rental for 1st Year is €120. We would ask that this be paid, along with the other costs, to the school before 30th September 2009.

Books remain the property of the school. Students are asked to cover their books and maintain them in excellent condition. Damaged/lost books must be replaced by the student concerned.

	1st Year	2nd Year	3rd Year	TY	5th Year	6th Year
Book Rental	€120	€ 80	€ 60	€ 50	€200	-----
Administration	€ 40	€ 40	€ 40	€ 40	€ 40	€ 40
Insurance	€ 10	€ 10	€ 10	€ 10	€ 10	€ 10
Lockers	<u>€ 5</u>	<u>€ 5</u>	<u>€ 5</u>	<u>€ 5</u>	<u>€ 5</u>	<u>€ 5</u>
	€175	€135	€115	€105	€255	€ 55

INTERNET ACCEPTABLE USAGE POLICY

Staff and Pupils

- When using the Internet, all users must comply with all copyright, libel, fraud, discrimination and obscenity laws, and all school staff (both teachers and support staff) are expected to communicate in a professional manner consistent with the rules of behaviour governing employees in the education sector.
- Pupils are responsible for their good behaviour on the school computers, just as they are, on and off the premises. While the use of information and communications technology is an important aspect of the curriculum, access to the Internet remains a privilege and not a right. It is given to pupils who act in a considerate and responsible manner, and will be withdrawn if they fail to maintain acceptable standards of use.
- Staff should ensure that pupils know and understand that no Internet user is permitted to:
 - retrieve, send, copy or display offensive messages or pictures;
 - use obscene or racist language;
 - harass, insult or attack others;
 - damage computers, computer systems or computer networks;
 - violate copyright laws;
 - use another user's password;
 - trespass in another user's folders, work or files;
 - use the network for unapproved commercial purposes
 - intentionally waste resources (such as on-line time, paper, ink)

Location and Supervision

- It is an absolute requirement that all school staff in Mercy Secondary School ensure that access to the Internet provided to staff and pupils in this school is through a filtered service. All users should be aware that the school can and does track and record the sites visited and the searches made on the Internet.
- While using the Internet at school pupils will be supervised.
- All pupils must understand that they are to use the Internet appropriately and why the rules exist.
- Network administrators will review files and communications to maintain system integrity and ensure that users are using the system responsibly. While normal privacy is respected and protected by password controls, as with the Internet itself, users must not expect files stored on the server to be absolutely private.

Examples of Acceptable and Unacceptable Use: -

On-line activities which are encouraged include, for example:-

- The use of email and computer conferencing for communication between colleagues, between pupils(s) and teacher(s), between pupil(s) and pupil(s), between school and industry;
- Use of the Internet to investigate and research school subjects, cross-curricular themes and topics related to social and personal development;
- Use of the Internet to investigate careers and further and higher education;
- The development of pupils' competence in ICT skills and their general research skills.

On-line activities which are not permitted include, for example: -

- Searching, viewing and/or retrieving materials that are not related to the aims of the curriculum or future careers;
- Copying, saving and/or redistributing copyright protected material, without approval;
- Subscribing to any services or ordering any goods or services, unless specifically approved by the school;
- Playing computer games or using other interactive 'chat' sites, unless specifically assigned by the teacher;
- Using the network in such a way that use of the network by others is disrupted (for example – downloading large files during peak usage times; sending mass email messages);
- Publishing, sharing or distributing any personal information about a user (such as home address, email address, phone number etc.);
- Any activity that violates a school rule;
- Intentionally wasting limited resources (e.g. printing).

Advice for Parents

While in school, teachers will guide pupils towards appropriate materials on the Internet. Outside school, parents or guardians bear the same responsibility for such guidance as they would normally exercise with information sources such as television, telephones, movies, radio and other media.

Appropriate home use of the Internet can be educationally beneficial, and can make a useful contribution to home and schoolwork. It should, however, be supervised, and parents should be aware that they are responsible for their children's use of the Internet resources at home.

Offering advice to parents is good practice and Mercy Secondary School, Kilbeggan will therefore advise parents that: -

1. it provides filtered and monitored access to the Internet for pupils;
2. will draw to parents attention appropriate guidance and advice on its use, which they might find helpful at home.

Such guidance and advice should include the following: -

- parents should discuss with their children the rules for using the Internet and decide together when, how long, and what comprises appropriate use;
- parents should get to know the sites their children visit, and talk to them about what they are learning;
- parents should ensure that they give their agreement before their children give out personal identifying information in any electronic communication on the Internet, such as a picture, an address, a phone number, the school name, or financial information such as credit card or bank details. In this way they can protect their children (and themselves) from unwanted or unacceptable overtures from strangers, from unplanned expenditure and from fraud;
- parents should encourage their children not to respond to any unwelcome, unpleasant or abusive messages, and to tell them if they receive any such messages or images. If the message comes from an Internet service connection provided by the school, they should immediately inform the Principal.

Child Protection Procedures

The Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures for –

1. Post Primary Schools, 2004, were adapted by the Board of Management of Mercy Secondary School, Kilbeggan on _____
2. _____ (Principal) was appointed as the Designated Liaison Person in respect of the protocol, and
_____ (Deputy Principal) was appointed as Deputy Designated Liaison Person in respect of the same.
3. The Board is committed to its obligation to provide students with the highest possible standard of care, in order to promote their well being and protection from harm. Where there is suspicion that a child may have been abused, is being abused or is at a risk of abuse, it commits to ensure that such concerns are reported in accordance with procedures set out in the Procedures and Guidelines

Signed : _____ Date : _____

(Chairperson of the Board of Management)

The Curriculum

JUNIOR CYCLE:

During the first three years, all students are prepared for the Junior Certificate Examination.

The subjects offered are: -

Irish	English	Mathematics
History	Geography	Wood Technology
Metal Technology	Technical Graphics	Science
Business Studies	Home Economics	French
German	Art	Music
C.S.P.E.	Religion	Physical Education
Computer Studies	Pastoral Care/S.P.H.E.	

SENIOR CYCLE:

The following subjects are offered as part of the Leaving Certificate Programme: -

Irish	English	Mathematics
History	Geography	Construction Studies
Engineering	Technical Drawing	French
German	Physics	Chemistry
Biology	Agricultural Science	Home Economics (Social &
Scientific)	Accounting	Business
Art	Music	Religion
Physical Education	Link Modules	

A Leaving Certificate Vocational Preparation course (L.C.V.P.) is also offered to all Senior Cycle students.

TRANSITION YEAR OPTION

Transition year offers pupils a broad educational experience which promotes social, personal and vocational development. It provides an environment where they will take greater responsibility for their own learning and decision making.

It will help them mature as young adults, develop general, technical and academic skills and experience the adult working life through work experience placement.

The following modules are offered as part of the programme:

Art Craft & Design	Business Calculations	Mini Company
Career Guidance	Computer Studies	French/German
Gaelic Studies	European Studies	Home Economics
Mathematics	Music	Religious Education
Film Studies	Social & Legal Studies	Sport & Recreation
Coaching Skills	Young Scientist	Horticulture Awareness
First Aid	Work Experience	Driving Skills
French Tour	Woodwork	Metalwork
Italian	Personal Development	

Specialist Rooms.

The school offers specialist facilities and equipment in Computers, Art, Science, Home Economics, Wood Technology, Metal Technology and Geography. The Information Technology Room is extensively used throughout the day.

Career Guidance and Counselling

This Programme begins in First Year. It involves not only the Guidance Counsellor but the Pastoral Care Teachers, Year Heads and Teachers of Religion. Junior classes receive guidance in such areas as:-

- Transition from Primary School to Secondary School.
- Study Skills.
- Learning to work and co-operate with others.
- Learning to take responsibility.
- A positive appreciation of the school organisation and code of discipline.

- Self awareness and aptitude (each student will complete an aptitude profile to help in his/her subject choices for Senior Cycle).

At Senior Cycle the Programme is expanded to include:-

- Assistance with Career/Educational Planning.
- A Programme of Career Options, Occupational Choice, Third Level Options.
- Preparation for, and evaluation of Work Experience in both Transition Year and Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme.
- Personal Guidance/Counselling.

Learning Support.

A comprehensive Remedial Education Programme is offered in both Mathematics and English. This programme is offered to students in a ‘small group’ setting/one-to-one basis. The programme also involves ongoing consultation and co-operation between teachers, parents and relevant agencies within the Department of Education and Science, as appropriate.

Extra Curricular Activities

Students are encouraged to engage in a range of extra curricular activities as an integral part of their education at Mercy Secondary School. These include Educational Tours, the Annual School Tour to Europe, Public Speaking, Debating, Inter-school Quizzes, Gaelic Football, Hurling, Basketball, Golf, Pitch and Putt, Tennis, Equestrian Teams, Athletics, School Choir & Badminton.

Book Rental

The school operates a very successful Book Rental Scheme which helps defray the high cost of school books. The scheme is available to all students.

School Transport

School Transport application forms are available in the school secretary’s office for those wishing to avail of the scheme.

Subject Options

French

French is on offer to Junior and Senior Cycle students. Emphasis is placed on the spoken, listening and written aspect of the language. It is a very useful, practical language to have. It is widely spoken. There are now more than 170 million French speakers spread across the five continents.

German

Studying German offers students an opportunity to speak, understand and write German. Students will also explore aspects of German culture to enable them to visit Germany in the future either for work or pleasure. Career opportunities also exist for German speakers in the many German firms based in Ireland. The German Department looks forward to meeting the boys and girls as we begin our learning journey in German.

Materials Technology Wood

In Materials Technology Wood students learn to solve design problems, in a creative way using the correct knowledge and skills. These skills will be developed through the processing of wood and other materials, while making an artefact or project. The Junior Cert exam involves designing and making a project as well as a theory exam. Students who enjoy Materials Technology Wood are usually creative and like hands-on activities.

Materials Technology Metalwork

This subject is quite similar to Materials Technology Wood in that students use new skills and knowledge to work through various design and manufacture problems. As well as a large amount of practical work, students learn the theory of how machines work plus many other facets of technology such as material properties and electronics.

Home Economics

Home Economics is concerned with how individuals, families and society manage their resources to meet their physical, social and economic needs. The following topics are studied in both an academic and practical way: Food Studies; Consumer Studies; Social and Health Education; Resource Management; Textiles; Child-care Studies. The examination involves a Practical Food Preparation exam; Assessment of Child-care Project and Written Examination undertaken in June of 3rd Year.

Technical Graphics

This subject is about the communication of ideas and problems using drawings, sketches and symbols. The course for Junior Cycle is mainly concerned with learning the basic skills necessary for graphical problem-solving and communication. Students who enjoy Technical Graphics are usually logical or mathematically minded who enjoy problem-solving. Engineering and Architecture are fields that would benefit from Technical Graphics.

Business Studies

The Business Studies syllabus is designed to prepare students for the commercial world. It gives students an insight into managing money on a personal and national level as well as an understanding of the economic environment. The Business Studies course can be divided into the following sections: -Business of Living; Economic Awareness and Business Background; Enterprise; Information Technology and Assessment – Business Studies are assessed at both higher and ordinary levels. Higher level students have two written papers while ordinary level students complete one written examination.

Art, Craft and Design

Art helps to develop a student's ability to visualise in three-dimensional form, to design and develop a concept into a fully realised product. Junior Certificate Art will help students to appreciate the visual elements of Drawing, Painting, Printing, Graphic Design, Batik, Pottery and three-dimensional construction.

Music

Many students study music in 1st Year as part of their Junior Cert curriculum. Previous experience of practical music is an advantage but not a requirement. The course covers all aspects of music, developing basic skills of reading, composing and listening. Assessment for Junior Cert involves practical work 25% e.g. singing, choral, instrument and a written paper 75%.