

Mercy Secondary School, Kilbeggan

Admissions Policy – December 2015

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. We are committed to the Charter of our Trustees, Catholic Education an Irish Schools Trust - CEIST.

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

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 Skills.
- 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 Skills 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 Bus Eireann 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 enroll 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 & Skills is appraised of the potential educational needs of incoming students and appropriate resources are requested.
- A meeting of parents/guardians of incoming students is held in advance of the new school year. 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 enroll 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 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 normal annual enrolment of 96 1st Year students has been reached
- 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 enroll 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 Skills 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 cater for 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 Skills.

- The school welcomes applications from students with special educational needs unless the nature and degree of those needs is such that to enroll 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 at the time of enrolment 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.
- 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))).

Transfers from Other Schools

- Applications for enrolment involving transfer from another school may normally only be made at the start of the school year, and only in very exceptional circumstances after the 30th September 2015. 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 school's 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.
- The Board of Management delegates to the Principal the authority to make decisions on all applications from students to transfer from another school. These decisions may be appealed to the Board as appropriate.
- 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 Behaviour.

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) Mercy Secondary School Kilbeggan must receive a copy of all written communication between the school from which the student was either suspended or expelled, and also 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.
- f) The Board of Management delegates to the Principal the authority to make decisions on all applications from students to transfer from another school. These decisions may be appealed to the Board as appropriate.

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 Cycle Programme in Mercy Secondary School may progress to the Senior Cycle.
- A 5th Year Programme is available to all. Transition Year is optional subject to the restrictions outlined below.

Transition Year Option available subject to the following criteria

Mercy Secondary School Kilbeggan will run a Transition Year Class each year – subject to resources being made available by the Department of Education & Skills. This class will cater for no more than **72** (3 Classes of 24 students each) students. Only students who have completed the Junior Cycle Programme will be considered for Transition Year. Students wishing to take up a place in Transition Year must complete a Formal Application Form, and return this to the Transition Year Co-ordinator with a deposit of €100 by the last Friday of March in the year in question. Only Application Forms properly completed with the €100 deposit will be considered. A Panel consisting of the Transition Year Co-ordinator, the Principal or Deputy Principal, and another Transition Year Teacher - as appointed by school management - will then decide on the suitability of applicants for Transition Year, taking a number of factors into account. These factors will be used to score each applicant out of 100 marks in the following manner –

• Suitability	30 marks
• Application Form	20 marks
• School Attendance Record	20 marks
• School Behaviour Record	<u>30 marks</u>
Total	100 marks

Each applicant must score a minimum of 70 marks out of 100 to be considered suitable for Transition Year. Any student who has missed 5 days or more that without appropriate certification in the previous school year will not be considered for Transition Year.

Each applicant will be informed formally of the Panels' decision no later than the last Friday in April. All decisions may be appealed to the Board of Management. Students from outside Mercy Secondary School Kilbeggan will only be considered for Transition Year when the school management is satisfied that the needs of all qualifying students currently enrolled at Mercy Secondary School Kilbeggan are met.

Once students have been joined Transition Year, they 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

Students will not be given permission to repeat 1st, 2nd 3rd, Transition Year or 6th Year at Mercy Secondary School Kilbeggan, unless the student receives a recommendation from the school Principal to do so. This will only happen in extremely exceptional and compassionate circumstances.

All applications to repeat 5th Year must be made to school management before the 1st May of the year prior to the school year in question. A meeting will then take place between the Principal and the student/parents/guardians in question. The meeting will consider the following - subject choice considerations, reasons for repeating, places available and resources available from the Department of Education & Skills. The Principal, in consultation with school staff will then decide as to whether or not the student in question will be given permission to repeat a school year. The following are the only grounds whereby a student may be given permission to repeat a year – Prolonged absence from school; Serious Illness; Serious Family Trauma; Poor academic record requiring remedial treatment or Change of School. Priority is given to past pupils of Mercy Secondary School who wish to repeat. This decision may be appealed to the Board of Management as appropriate.

This policy has been ratified by the Board of Management at its meeting of

_____ (date)

Signed _____ Chairperson

Next review date : _____