



## **Admission Policy of**

### **Mercy Secondary School Kilbeggan**

**School Address : Kilbeggan, Co. Westmeath**

**Roll number : 63221U**

**School Patron : CEIST**

#### **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 **25<sup>th</sup> September 2024**. 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 **Mercy Secondary School Kilbeggan** 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 Mercy Secondary School**

Mercy Secondary School Kilbeggan is a Catholic co-educational voluntary secondary school with a Catholic ethos under the trusteeship of CEIST (Catholic Education an Irish Schools' Trust).

In accordance with S.15 (2) (b) of the Education Act, 1998, the Board of Management of Mercy Secondary School Kilbeggan shall uphold, and be accountable to the patron for so upholding, the characteristic spirit of the school as determined by the cultural, educational, moral, religious, social, linguistic and spiritual values and traditions which inform and are characteristic of the objectives and conduct of the school.

“Catholic Ethos” in the context of a Catholic voluntary secondary school means the ethos and characteristic spirit of the Roman Catholic Church which aims to promote:

- (a) the full and harmonious development of all aspects of the person, including the intellectual, physical, cultural, moral and spiritual aspects; and
- (b) a living relationship with God and with other people; and
- (c) a philosophy of life inspired by belief in God and in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus; and
- (d) the formation of the pupils in the Catholic faith in accordance with the doctrines, practices and traditions of the Roman Catholic Church, and/or such ethos and/or characteristic spirit as may be determined or interpreted from time to time by the Irish Episcopal Conference.

Catholic education is therefore a lifelong process of human growth and development which has been at the heart of the Church’s mission since Jesus Christ urged his disciples to ‘go teach all nations’. The person of Christ is the core of Catholic education.

Mercy Secondary School Kilbeggan draws on the richness of the religious and cultural heritage of the past, interpreted and lived out for students living in today’s world. The charism of founder Catherine McAuley of the Mercy Order who began this school is of very significant importance in the life of the school.

As a CEIST school, Mercy Secondary School Kilbeggan values teaching as one of the most important of all human activities. Our school seeks to build a quality learning community that welcomes, and bears witness to the Gospel values of Jesus Christ, expressed through the lens of the CEIST Charter. These are encapsulated in the core values which are intended to support and nourish the lives of the people who are at the heart of our schools.

- Promoting Spiritual and Human Development
- Achieving Quality in Teaching and Learning
- Showing Respect for Every Person
- Creating Community
- Being Just and Responsible

Mercy Secondary School Kilbeggan is inspired by the words of Jesus Christ to his disciples, “I have come that they may have life and have it to the full” (Jn 10:10). Because of this, Mercy Secondary School Kilbeggan provides a rich, holistic education in the Catholic tradition where engagement with and development of the whole person; the intellectual, moral, religious, physical, spiritual and psychological are at the core of our practice.

Education has as its goal the formation of a human person who is free, rational and mature in relationships. Mercy Secondary School Kilbeggan offers educational opportunities which promote excellence so that students can respond responsibly and creatively to their own lives, the lives of others and to the earth, which is our common home.

In Mercy Secondary School Kilbeggan the dignity and uniqueness of every human being as a child of God is acknowledged and affirmed. The Catholic school is an inclusive community, ideally built on love and formed by the interaction and collaboration of its various components: students, parents, teachers, non-teaching staff and members of the Board of Management. Catholic schools are also outward looking. They are connected to their local parish and Diocese and other local organisations which enrich the life of the school. Our school draws on the rich resources of the local community and, in turn, contributes to the life of the local community.

As a Catholic school, Religious Education is central to our curriculum. Alongside Religious Education, the school supports the formation in faith of our students through many school-based experiences of prayer and ritual. All students’ spiritual growth is further enhanced through such areas as sport, language, nature, art, poetry and music.

## **Mission Statement**

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

## **3. Admission Statement**

Mercy Secondary School Kilbeggan 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.

Mercy Secondary School Kilbeggan 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 the Catholic Faith in preference to others.

Mercy Secondary School Kilbeggan 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 Catholic and it is proved that the refusal is essential to maintain the ethos of the school.

Mercy Secondary School Kilbeggan is a school which has established a class, 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 Special Classes**

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

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

Mercy Secondary School Kilbeggan with the approval of the Minister for Education and Skills, has established **five** classes to provide an education exclusively for students with Autism.

#### **Criteria for Enrolment**

- Each prospective student must meet the following criteria as set out by the DES -
  - Recent professional report (within 2 years) from a psychologist or psychiatrist
  - have a diagnosis of Autism in accordance with DSM V / ICD 10 criteria
  - have complex or severe learning needs that require the support of a special class (detailed in the report)
  - clear recommendation for an Autism special class as part of mainstream second level education from a psychologist, psychiatrist or multidisciplinary team
- The class will only cater for children who are 12 years of age or more on the 1<sup>st</sup> September of the school year in question, unless there is specific approval from the Department of Education and Skills for a particular student who is outside this age limit.
- Under guidelines from the Department of Education and Skills the number of places in the four Autism Classes is limited to **thirty** students. (Five classes of six students)

The Admissions Committee will deal with any applications for enrolment in the Autism Class. The Admissions Committee reviews the psychological assessment of the child and any enrolment is subject to the approval of the said committee.

The members of the Admissions Committee are – Chairperson B.O.M, Principal, Deputy Principal, Autism Class Co-ordinator, and the dedicated NEPS Psychologist. The decision of the committee is subject to Board approval.

## 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

Mercy Secondary School Kilbeggan is a Catholic co-educational voluntary secondary school and may refuse to admit as a student a person who is not of the Catholic Faith where it is proved that the refusal is essential to maintain the ethos of the school.

The special classes attached to Mercy Secondary School Kilbeggan provides an education exclusively for students with Autism and the school may refuse admission to this class, where the student concerned does not have the specified category of special educational needs provided for in this class.

## 6. Oversubscription (this section must be completed by all schools including schools that do not anticipate being oversubscribed)

In the event that the school is oversubscribed, the school will, when deciding on applications for admission, apply the following selection criteria in the order listed below to those applications that are received within the timeline for receipt of applications as set out in the school's annual admission notice:

The ranked criteria, numbered 1 – 4, 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. Applicants attending the feeder schools named below.
4. Applicants who do not fall into any of the above categories

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.

### **Primary Feeder Schools:**

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

### **Oversubscription of Mercy Secondary School Kilbeggan's Autism Class**

If the number of the children on the list of applicants exceeds the number of places available the following ranked criteria will apply

1. Applicants with siblings already in the school.
2. Applicants attending the feeder schools listed above.
3. Applicants not attending these feeder schools for whom this Autism Class would be the nearest facility.
4. Applicants not in any of the above categories.

If the number of applicants at any of the ranked criteria above, exceeds the number of places available, then the available places will be allocated on the basis of date of birth, with priority being given to the oldest applicant at that criteria level, and continuing thus forth until all places are filled.

### **7. What will not be considered or taken into account**

In accordance with section 62(7)(e) of the Education Act, the school will not consider or take into account any of the following in deciding on applications for admission or when placing a student on a waiting list for admission to the school:

- (a) a student's prior attendance at a pre-school or pre-school service, including naíonraí,
- (b) the payment of fees or contributions (howsoever described) to the school;
- (c) a student's academic ability, skills or aptitude;
- (d) the occupation, financial status, academic ability, skills or aptitude of a student's parents, other than as outlined in section 6 above regarding staff of the school.
- (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; other than, in the case of siblings of a student attending or having attended the school.
- (g) the date and time on which an application for admission was received by the school, This is subject to the application being received at any time during the period specified for receiving applications set out in the annual admission notice of the school for the school year concerned. This is also subject to the school making offers based on existing waiting lists (up until 31<sup>st</sup> January 2026 only).

## 8. Decisions on applications

All decisions on applications for admission to Mercy Secondary School Kilbeggan 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 Mercy Secondary School Kilbeggan, 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 Mercy Secondary School Kilbeggan 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.

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.

## **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 Mercy Secondary School Kilbeggan 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 Mercy Secondary School Kilbeggan 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.

The school does not maintain a historical waiting 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**

Applications for enrolment involving transfer from another school may normally only be made before the start of the school year, and only in very exceptional circumstances after the 30<sup>th</sup> September of the year in question. Applications will be accepted subject to the following –

1. The terms of the School's Admissions Policy.
2. The availability of places.
3. Subject choice considerations.
4. Health and Safety considerations.
5. The completion of an application form for students who wish to transfer.
6. Consultation with the Educational Welfare Officer 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.

The school will advise applicants of the outcome of their application within twenty school days of receipt of the same application. If admission is refused the school will advise the student of the reason for the refusal and, if the school is oversubscribed, the school will advise the applicant of their ranking on the waiting list.

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.

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 Mercy Secondary School Kilbeggan or any persons acting on its behalf shall not, except in accordance with section 64 of the Education Act 1998 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 Mercy Secondary School Kilbeggan without attending religious instruction should make a written request to the Principal. A meeting will then be arranged with the parent or the student, as the case may be, to discuss how that request may be accommodated by the school.

## **18. Admission to Senior Cycle**

- Students who have completed the Junior Cycle Programme in Mercy Secondary School may progress to the Senior Cycle.
- A 5<sup>th</sup> Year Programme is available to all. Transition Year is optional subject to the restrictions outlined below.

## **19. 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.. 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

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.

## 20. Repeat Students for all Years

Students will not be given permission to repeat 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> 3<sup>rd</sup>, Transition Year or 6<sup>th</sup> 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 5<sup>th</sup> Year must be made to school management before the 1<sup>st</sup> 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.

## 21. 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.

Signed: *Paul Daly*

Chairperson of Board of Management

Date: **7<sup>th</sup> November 2024**

Signed: *Garrett Farrell*

Principal/Secretary to the Board of Management

Date : **7<sup>th</sup> November 2024**