



Sancta Maria College Admissions Policy

Link to Mission Statement

Sancta Maria College is a Catholic secondary school for girls in the tradition of the Sisters of Mercy (founded by Catherine McAuley), and under the trusteeship of Catholic Education an Irish Schools Trust (CEIST). CEIST is the patron of the school.

The Mercy Philosophy of Education

Inspired by the vision of Catherine McAuley, Mercy Education is committed to holistic development and to the achievement of the full potential of each student, particularly those who are disadvantaged or marginalized. It is a process informed and influenced by the teaching and example of Jesus Christ and is conducted in an atmosphere of care, respect and joy.

As a Catholic School, in keeping with our Mission Statement, our school is inclusive in enrolments and comprehensive in curriculum and co-curricular activity. The Religious Education Policy is central to the Catholic ethos of the school. The Code of Behaviour is based on the principles of truth, justice, peace and love. We endeavour to fulfil our Mission in partnership with parents/guardians, staff, students, trustees and the local community.

Introduction, Scope, Rationale, Legal Framework

Introduction

This policy of Sancta Maria College must reflect its:

- specific Mercy ethos and Catholic values
- Mission statement
- legal obligations
- particular circumstances.

Scope

This document sets out the policy of Sancta Maria College in respect of admissions of:

- A. Students applying for a place in First Year
- B. Students from outside the school (newly moved into the area) applying for a place in any other year group or programme
- C. Students applying to transfer from a nearby second-level school
- D. Students within the school applying to repeat any year of any programme within the school

- E. Students from outside the school applying for a place to repeat any year of any programme within Sancta Maria
- F. Students from within the school applying for a place on any programme within the school (such as Transition Year, Leaving Certificate, Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme, Leaving Certificate Applied)
- G. Students with disability or special educational needs
- H. Students whose first language is not English.

This document makes reference to the Sancta Maria College Behaviour Code.

Rationale

This policy aims to detail the criteria and procedures by which Sancta Maria College:

- makes decisions on all applications in an open and transparent manner consistent with the ethos, Mission Statement and legislative requirements
- makes an accurate and appropriate assessment of the capacity of the school to cater for the needs of applicants in light of resources available to it
- describes a framework that ensures effective and productive relations among students, parents and teachers where a student is admitted to the school.

Legal Framework

This policy is compliant with relevant section of the:

- Education Act, 1998: S. 9 j, S 15. 2. d, S. 27.1
- Education Welfare Act, 2000: S. 19.1, S. 19. 2, S. 19. 3, S. 22, S. 23.
- Equal Status Act, 2000: S. 3.3, S. 3.4, S. 5, S. 7. 2, S. 7. 3.

Code of Behaviour

The School Code of Behaviour is in alignment with the school mission statement and is based on principles of justice, truth, peace and love. It is very important that Parents understand the principles and practice in the school. The Code of Behaviour is an important element of the Pastoral Care; it aims to support students in establishing boundaries, to develop self-discipline and responsibility and to maintain a safe, happy learning environment for everyone. On application for enrolment, Parents must sign their acceptance of the school Code of Behaviour. Each year, Parents are reminded of the school Code of Behaviour which is included in the Student Journal. When current students are registering for Fifth Year, Parents must sign to renew their acceptance of the Code of Behaviour.

Signing acceptance of the school Code of Behaviour is a requirement of applicants, whether for First Year or for a Year Group other than First Year.

Religious Education Policy

The Religious Education Policy is a significant element in the implementation of the Catholic ethos and the Mercy philosophy of education. The Religious Education Policy is available from the school office. Signing acceptance of the school Religious Education Policy is a requirement of applicants, whether for First Year or for a Year Group other than First Year.

A. Procedures for Admission into First Year

Application forms are available from the school office on request. When an application form, properly completed, is received by the school it will be stamped with the date and time on which it was received. Parents are requested to complete a further information form regarding their child's educational progress and to co-operate with the school's attempts to identify the educational or other relevant needs of the child. Failure to fully complete the application form or to supply relevant signed documentation requested by the school or to make a reasonable arrangement to meet the Principal to discuss the application may result in a refusal of admission.

At the end of September, the school will write to each of the applicants for the following September, to attend an information evening in October or November. This information meeting will be publicised in all the feeder schools. Applicants will be given all the necessary documentation for completion by a return date. After the return date for signed documentation, places will be offered. If the number of applicants exceeds the number of places available, offers will be made based on the criteria below.

Enrolment criteria

As 30 is the maximum number for general subjects and 24 is the maximum number for practical subjects, the maximum numbers for first year in a particular year will be determined by multiples of 30 or 24. The maximum number of places which the school can normally accommodate in first year is 120 (four base class groups and five practical class groups). Depending on the projected teacher allocation from the Department of Education and Science, the maximum number for first year may be a lower multiple of 30 or 24. Where the number of applications exceeds the number of places available, places will be offered according to the following order of priority:

1. Daughters of members of current staff
2. Students attending the traditional feeder school of Naomh Padraig, Ballyroan
3. Students who have a sister in the school, or students who are daughters of past students
4. Applicants in chronological order of date of receipt of application.

In November, offers of places will be made based on the criteria above and parents receiving such an offer will be given fourteen days to accept or reject the offer. At the same time and if necessary, a waiting list will be established based on the criteria above. Applicants after the November offer will be added to the waiting list according to the date of receipt of the application.

All applicants to first year are obliged to sit the school's Diagnostic Assessment on a day, time and date determined by the school. A student who fails to sit this test without good reason (as judged by the school) and supported by the relevant documentation will put their admission at risk. The Board of Management may revoke an earlier decision to admit such a student and to offer a place to a student on the waiting list.

B. Procedures for Admission into a Year Group other than First Year for Students new to the area

This procedure relates to students who may be newly moved into the area. Application forms are available from the school office on request. Applicants should complete the application form, giving all of the details required. Incomplete forms will be returned to parents/guardian.

Applicants will be required to furnish details of their prior second-level education including copies of their last two school reports that set out the results of in-house examinations. Where a student has completed the Junior Certificate State examination, results from that examination must also be supplied. Any Diagnostic Assessment results from other schools should also be supplied or the applicant should give approval to Sancta Maria College to contact the other school regarding such assessments. Where an applicant has attended more than one second-level school they may be required, at the discretion of the Board, to submit reports from each school and copies of the results of any State examinations.

Where it is considered necessary by the school, an applicant may be required to complete a further information form regarding their child's educational progress or to provide a current educational/psychological assessment report. Failure to complete any of the necessary documentation listed above or to supply any other relevant documentation requested by the school may result in an applicant being refused admission to the school. For applications to be accepted, parents must sign their acceptance of the school Code of Behaviour.

Enrolment criteria:

1. Applicants must meet any criteria stipulated by the Department of Education and Science
2. All applicants must supply a Birth Certificate or other appropriate identification such as passport
3. In exceptional circumstances, the school reserves the right to refuse to admit a student whose behaviour and/or attendance record in their previous school has been unsatisfactory
4. The overall capacity of the school will be 750 students when the current building project is complete. Until then, the capacity of the school is 690 students. Therefore, the overall enrolment cannot exceed 690 until the completed building project provides the capacity for 750 students. The appropriate number of students in any one year group may be decided by the Board of Management and the decision will be influenced by the criteria of 30 maximum in academic classes and 24 maximum in practical classes.

C. Procedures for Admission into a Year other than First Year from a Nearby Second-Level School

Application forms are available from the school office on request. Applicants should complete the application form, giving all of the details required. Incomplete forms will be returned to parents/guardian.

Applicants will be required to furnish details of their prior second-level education including copies of their last two school reports that set out the results of in-house examinations. Where a student has completed the Junior Certificate State examination, results from that examination must also be supplied. Any Diagnostic Assessment results from other schools should also be supplied or the applicant should give approval to Sancta Maria to contact the other school regarding such assessments. Where an applicant has attended more than one second-level school they may be required, at the discretion of the Board, to submit reports from each school and copies of the results of any State examinations.

The applicant will be required to complete a further information form including the reasons for the application to transfer. The applicant will be informed that Sancta Maria College will contact the current school regarding the application for transfer.

The school may require that the applicant complete a further information form regarding their child's educational progress or to provide a current educational/psychological assessment report. Failure to complete any of the necessary documentation requested by the school may result in an applicant being refused admission to the school. For applications to be accepted, parents must sign their acceptance of the school Code of Behaviour.

Enrolment criteria:

1. Applicants must meet any criteria stipulated by the Department of Education and Skills
2. All applicants must supply a Birth Certificate or other appropriate identification
3. In exceptional circumstances, the school reserves the right to refuse to admit a student whose behaviour and/or attendance record in their previous school has been unsatisfactory
4. The overall capacity of the school will be 750 students when the current building project is complete. Until then, then capacity of the school is 690 students. Therefore, the overall enrolment cannot exceed 690 until the completed building project provides the capacity for 750 students. The appropriate number of students in any one year group may be decided by the Board of Management and the decision will be influenced by the criteria of 30 maximum in academic classes and 24 maximum in practical classes.

D./E. Admission to Repeat any Year or Programme within the School and from outside the School

Applications to repeat any Year or Programme from students within the school will be accepted strictly on the criteria stipulated by the Department of Education and Science in Circular M2/95. Applications must be in writing and must state the relevant Circular and the particular clause/s being invoked in support of the application and must be accompanied by supporting documentation, as appropriate. The school must be satisfied that the applicant, in light of the special circumstances that gave rise to the application, applied herself to the best of her ability.

Applications will be considered in the light of places available in the relevant Year Group or programme, subject to class size and the enrolment restrictions set out elsewhere in this policy. Students in a Year Group or programme for the first time will be given priority in terms of places and subject choices.

Applications to repeat the Leaving Certificate will be considered in the context of the places available in the relevant subjects, the overall programme and overall enrolment within the school and in the context of the student's previous academic record, application to studies, attendance etc.

Priority will be given to students within the school who are permitted by the school, in accordance with Department regulations, to repeat a school year. The school will determine how many places, if any, are available to students from outside the school after this priority for students within the school is finalised.

Applications from outside the school to repeat a year or programme also have to be strictly according to the criteria stipulated by the Department. Documentary requirements stipulated in Procedures B and C above apply also for applications for repeating a year/programme. Such applicants can be accepted only if numbers permit after accommodating students from within the school.

F. Procedures for Admission to Specific Programmes, Subjects or Subject Level

As 24 is the maximum number for practical subjects and 30 is the maximum number for general subjects, the maximum numbers for programmes, subjects and/or subject levels may be determined by multiples of 24 or 30. Minimum numbers for a subject may also apply.

If the demand for a specific programme, subject or subject level exceeds the number of places available, then the school will make every effort, within the constraints of teaching resources etc., to accommodate the student. Where it is not possible to accommodate all applicants then priority will be given to students from within the school and to those who have completed all application forms on time.

1. **Entry to specific programmes** will be determined following a review of the application forms, reports, results, any assessments and an interview process with school personnel such as the Guidance Counsellor, the co-ordinator of the Programme, the Learning Support teacher and the Deputy Principal. This review and interview process is designed to ascertain the suitability of the applicant for the specific programme. The school may also take into account the availability of other suitable courses within the school to competing applicants.
2. **Entry to specific subjects** will be determined by reference to the preferences indicated by students on their application form and by reference to the student's previous performance at that subject relative to the other applicants; their results in State examinations where available will also be considered. The school may consult assessments carried out by the Learning Support Teacher or DATS results. The school may take into account the availability of other suitable subjects available to competing applicants.
3. **Entry to specific subject levels** will be determined by the student's previous performance at that subject relative to the other applicants; their results in State examinations, where available, will also be considered.

G. Procedure for Admission of Students with Special Educational Needs

Sancta Maria College welcomes students with special needs and will use the resources provided by the Department of Education and Science to make reasonable accommodation for students with disability or special educational needs up to a nominal cost so that these students are free to participate in the life in the school insofar as is reasonably practicable.

While recognising and fully supporting parents' prerogative to have a school of their choice for their children, the College'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 Skills.

The College 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 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.

The Principal may request a meeting with the parents of the student to discuss the application and the student's needs. Similarly, the parents of the student may request a meeting with the Principal to discuss the student's educational or other needs.

N.B. Parents of students with special educational needs are strongly advised to inform the College as early as possible and discuss their particular situation well in advance of making application. It may take some time for the Department of Education and Skills to process such applications for resources.

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/guardian in writing thereof (Education Welfare Act Section 19 {3}).

H. Procedure for Admission of Students whose First Language is not English

Sancta Maria College welcomes students whose first language is not English and will use the resources provided by the Department of Education and Skills to enable the students to access the education provided at Sancta Maria College and to participate in the life in the school as soon as reasonably possible.

While recognising and fully supporting parents' prerogative to have a school of their choice for their children, the College's ability to accept students who do not have sufficient

proficiency in the English language 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 College welcomes applications from students whose first language is not English unless their lack of proficiency in English 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 other students with whom the student concerned is to be educated.

The Board of Management must be made aware of any particular requirements in English language learning as early as possible, so that the need for English language learning can be assessed and addressed where possible. Parents are requested to outline the details of a child's English language learning needs at the time of application. The Board of Management, having gathered all relevant information and professional documentation, assesses how the English language learning needs of the student can be met.

The Principal may request a meeting with the parents of the student to discuss the application and the student's need for English language learning. Similarly, the parents of the student may request a meeting with the Principal to discuss the student's need for English language learning.

N.B. Parents of students with need for English language learning are strongly advised to inform the College as early as possible and discuss their particular situation well in advance of making application. It may take some time for the Department of Education and Skills to process such applications for resources.

Decision-making Process regarding Admission to First Year, Other Year Groups and Specific Programmes and Subjects

This is a matter for the Board of Management but is normally delegated to the Principal, who decides on such matters in accordance with the school's admission policy. The Principal may refer any application to the Board for decision.

Right of Refusal

Our College Catholic ethos requires that even if there is a firm conviction that the best interests of the student would be better served elsewhere, these are not grounds for unilaterally refusing a student. Where the school lacks the necessary resources to meet the needs of any applicant, it will make every effort to secure those resources — where the resources cannot be secured the Board of Management reserves the right to refuse admission. Ultimately, the right to refuse admission is a matter for the Board of Management, who must balance the rights of the individual alongside the rights of the school community.

Right of Appeal

Where an applicant is refused admission to the school or to a specific programme within the school, she has the right to appeal this decision to the Board of Management, or under Section 29 of the Education Act, 1998, to the Secretary General of the Department of Education and Skills.

School Policies and Procedures

Policies and procedures relating to school life, including the Code of Behaviour, are available from the school office. The Code of Behaviour is also detailed in the school Student Journal.

Review and Evaluation

The implementation, monitoring, review and evaluation of this policy will be a matter for school staff and the Board of Management. The Board of Management should monitor enrolment numbers and should review this policy, after consultation with staff, once every two years.

Adopted by the Board of Management on 13th May 2008

Amended by the Board of Management on 25th March 2009

Signature of Chairperson: Sean Gilroy
Chairperson.

Signature of Secretary: Denise Burns
Principal.