

ADMISSIONS POLICY

The Admissions Policy of Our Lady's Secondary School is published in accordance with Department of Education and Skills guidelines, the Education Act 1998, the Education Welfare Act 2000, the Equal Status Act 2000 and other relevant legislation.

Our Lady's Secondary School acknowledges the right of parents/guardians to send their children to a school of their choice having regard to the rights of the Board of Management of Our Lady's Templemore and the effective use of resources pursuant to the Education Act 1998 Section 6 (e). The school will take into account the safety and rights of all relevant persons and will admit students subject to functions of the Minister pursuant to section 7 (1) of the Education Act 1998.

AN INCLUSIVE SCHOOL

Our Lady's Secondary School is an inclusive school which prohibits discrimination on the nine grounds outlined in the Equal Status Act 2000 (gender, marital status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, race, membership of the travelling community). In its policies and practices Our Lady's is committed to prohibiting harassment and sexual harassment, to providing reasonable accommodation of people with disabilities, and to allowing for positive action to promote equality for those who are disadvantaged or need special arrangements.

Admission to Our Lady's is open to all students and enrolment is contingent on:

- Having reached the required age: students must be aged 12 on the 1st January in the calendar year following the child's entry into First Year.
- Having completed Sixth Class in Primary School or the equivalent.
- A completed Application Form (available from the school office) being submitted to the school.
- Being willing, with parents/guardians to accept the School Code of Behaviour and school policies.
- Attendance at Assessment Test (and interview if requested)
- Being willing to accept and support the school ethos/spirit.
- Parents/guardians agreeing at the time of application to the transfer of relevant assessments and reports from all previous schools.
- Fulfilling the requirements for transfer from another school in certain circumstances.

Procedure for Admission

Our Lady's will communicate with prospective students through the school website [www.ourladystemplemore.ie] and through community communication including primary school visits, open night, parish announcements and advertisements in local media. All prospective students and parents/guardians are welcome to attend the annual Open Night. The Prospectus and an application form are distributed to students who attend primary schools in the catchment area and are also available on request at the secretary's office.

The parent/guardian of a child (or a student who is over 18 of age) who has made an application for admission to Our Lady's Secondary School is required to furnish such information as may be prescribed by the school authority. Our Lady's, affirms that it may seek the following information, prior to making a decision regarding their admission to the school:

- Completed application form which includes;
 - Name, age and address of the student
 - Birth certificate of the student
 - Passport sized photograph of the student (which must be signed by the student)
 - Addresses of parents/guardians
 - Relevant telephone numbers, including emergency numbers
 - Name, address and telephone number of the student's previous/present school
 - Relevant medical information, including medical card number and review date if applicable.
 - Relevant information regarding access to the student, custody of the student and legal orders pertaining to the student.
 - Information and records from present school
 - Details of Special Educational Needs
 - Eligibility for assistance with school books
 - Other information which may be of relevance to the school and its ethos

- Students transferring to Our Lady's are required to attend an interview with Principal/Deputy Principal as part of the enrolment procedure. He/she should be accompanied by a parent/guardian.

It is the responsibility of parent(s)/guardian(s) to keep the school informed of any changes to the above information.

Completed application forms should be submitted by February 28 each year. Our Lady's affirms that within a reasonable period of time following the receipt of the relevant information, the school management shall issue a decision to the parent/guardian. Under normal circumstances this letter will issue within 21 days of the closing date. Applicants who are being offered places will be invited to confirm in writing acceptance or otherwise by March 31 each year. Late applicants should follow the procedure outlined above. These applications will be considered subject to the availability of places.

Enrolment of Students with Special Educational Needs

Our Lady's welcomes students with special educational needs and will use the resources, both financial and personnel, provided by the Department of Education and Skills to make reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities for special educational needs so that these students are free to participate in the life of the school in so far as is reasonably practicable.

While recognising and fully supporting the right of parents/guardians to have a school of their choice for their children, Our Lady's ability to accept students with particular needs is dependent on resources being supplied by the Department of Education and Skills suitable to the needs of the individual student.

The school will enrol students with special educational needs (subject to the conditions laid out in this policy) 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/guardians are requested to outline the details of the student's special educational needs on the Application Form. All relevant documentation should be forwarded to the school. The Principal/Deputy Principal may request a meeting with the parents/guardians of the student to discuss the application and the student's needs. The parents/guardians of the student may request a meeting with the Principal/Deputy Principal to discuss the student's needs.

The Board of Management will review the application and assess how the needs of the student 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.

It may take some time for the Department of Education and Skills to process applications for resources for students with special educational needs. Parents/guardians are strongly advised to inform the school as early as possible and discuss their particular situation well in advance of the annual closing date for applications.

Transfer of a student from other schools providing Post-Primary Education

Interschool transfers may be subject to Board of Management approval. All relevant reports together with any vital or important information relating to the student's academic history, health, behaviour and any other matters must be submitted by the parent(s)/guardian(s) to the school authorities for consideration. Failure to do so will deem the application invalid. The school will make every reasonable effort to facilitate students seeking a transfer to our school.

The applicant and her/his parent(s)/guardian(s) will be required to attend an interview with the Principal/Deputy Principal. Before admission of a student registered in another recognised post-primary school, the Principal/Deputy will contact that school to request details relating to the student's attendance, educational performance, behaviour and such other matters relating to the educational progress of the student. Students transferring to Our Lady's may have attended other post-primary schools, these schools will have prior responsibility for their post-primary education.

Following receipt of all relevant information from the former school and any necessary consultation with parent(s)/guardian(s) the application will be considered based on the following criteria:

- Student and parents/guardians compliance with Admissions Policy requirements.
- Class vacancy in the particular year group and places available in option subjects.
- The school authorities being satisfied with the reason(s) for transfer and that the transfer is in the best interest of the student and in the best interest of the school.
- The school authorities being satisfied that the admission of the applicant would not have a negative impact on the common good of the school, or be a risk to the health and safety of others in the school, or interfere in a serious way with the education of other students.

Refusal to enrol

Following a refusal to enrol at student, the parent/guardian firstly have a right to appeal the decision of the principal to the Board of Management. The individual case will be brought to the Board of Management. The Board of Management reserves the right to refuse an application to enrol in the school in line with the Admissions Policy of Our Lady's Secondary School and Section 15 (2) d and Section 7 (1) a of the Education Act 1998. The Board of Management may revoke an offer of enrolment if it becomes aware of vital or significant information relating to the applicant being withheld.

Appeals

Under the Education Act 1998, Section 29, parent(s)/guardian(s) have a right to appeal a refusal by the Board of Management to enrol a student. The procedure regarding the appeals process can be obtained from the school office if required.

Procedure for Appeal

Should a student's application for admission to the school be refused, the parents/guardians have the right to appeal to the Secretary General of the Department of Education and Skills, (Education Act 1998, Section 29 (d)). The appeal must be made within 42 calendar days from the date the decision of the Board of Management was notified to the parents/guardians concerned. (Circular, M48/01).

An appeal may be made to The Secretary General of the Department of Education and Skills, the Appeals Administration Unit, Department of Education and Skills, Marlborough Street, Dublin 1.

An appeal should be made in writing on the official Application Form. The Appeals Application Form should be completed in full and should state:

1. The decision being appealed.
2. The grounds on which the decision is being appealed.
3. The date that the parents/guardians were informed of the decision.
4. All other relevant information. (Circular M48/01)

The school must be informed in writing of the decision to appeal.

Having regard to the desirability of resolving grievances within the school where possible, the parties to an appeal under Section 29, i.e. the appellant and the school's Board of Management, will be asked to consider the matter in the first instance at local level to see if an accommodation can be reached. As a general rule, appeals will only be considered by an Appeals Committee under section 29 where the parties are unable to resolve the issue at local level. (Circular M48/01)

SUSPENSIONS/EXPULSION

In the case of certain instances of unacceptable behaviour it may be in the best interest of the school community and/or the student involved for the student to be removed from the school for a period of time or completely. Suspension and expulsion are the options available to the Board of Management in these situations.

The Principal/Deputy Principal has authority to suspend any student for a limited period, such suspension to be reported to the next meeting of the Board of Management. If in the judgement of the Principal a student should be expelled, the Principal shall refer the matter to the Board of Management. The Board of Management and the Principal will exercise this authority having regard to their responsibilities to the whole school community. The Principles of Natural Justice are fundamental to the implementation of these procedures. In implementing these procedures, the Principal and the Board of Management will ensure that no student is discriminated against on any of the nine grounds specified in the Equal Status Act. [this is subject to the provision of Section 7 4(b) Equal Status Act 2000]

The Board of Management will ensure that the implementation of these procedures will take into account such factors as:

- (a) Age and health of the student
- (b) The student's previous record at the school
- (c) Any particular circumstances unique to the student, which might sensibly be taken into account in connection with the behaviour e.g. bereavement.
- (d) The severity of the behaviour i.e the degree to which the behaviour was a violation of one or more school rules.
- (e) The frequency of offences and the likelihood of reoccurrence
- (f) Whether or not the behaviour impaired or will impair the normal functioning of the student or other students in the school.
- (g) The reputation of the school.
- (h) Whether the incident was perpetrated by the student on his/her own or as part of a group.

SUSPENSION

Suspension is only one strategy within the school's Code of Behaviour. The Principal/Deputy Principal may suspend immediately in some circumstances e.g. incidents of fighting, assault, violence, threat of violence, presence of illegal drugs, presence of weapons, persistent refusal to obey an instruction, persistent disruption of class, the use of foul or abusive language to any member of staff, racial or sexual harassment, serious cases of vandalism or damage to property, bullying or leaving the school premises without prior permission from the school.

In other circumstances suspensions will only occur after the Principal has:

- (a) Ensured all discipline options under the Code of Behaviour have been applied and documented
- (b) Ensured all appropriate support personnel have been involved
- (c) Ensured that communication has taken place with the student and parent/guardian regarding the breaches of discipline, which the school considers may lead to suspension.

When a student has been suspended the parent/guardian will be notified in writing. The suspension letter will give details of an appointment for the parent/guardian to meet the Principal/Deputy Principal. This meeting must take place before the student returns to school.

On suspension a parent/guardian will be contacted to arrange for the student to be brought home without delay. (Staff resources do not allow for supervision of students who have been suspended.)

It is essential that parents/guardians take an active role in working with the school to assist a suspended student to rejoin the school community as quickly as possible. Suspension allows the student time to reflect on his/her behaviour, to acknowledge and accept responsibility for the behaviour, which led to the suspension and to accept responsibility for changing his/her behaviour to meet the school's expectations in the future.

Grounds for removing a suspension

Under Section 23 (2) (d) of the Education Act the school may remove a suspension where

- (a) New circumstances come to the Principal's notice
- (b) Other factors as described in "GENERAL PRINCIPLES APPLYING TO SANCTIONS" pertain

Formal appeal against suspension

A parent/guardian, or student aged 18 or more, may appeal against a suspension. For an appeal against a short suspension (1-5 days) the parent/guardian shall make an appointment with the Principal to discuss the issue. For an appeal against a longer suspension (6 days +) the parent/guardian shall appeal in writing to the Secretary of the Board of Management.

EXPULSION

Expulsion is the ultimate sanction. Authority to expel is reserved to the Board of Management. It is a sanction to be used for an extreme case of indiscipline or a case of a student persisting in repeated disruptive or offensive behaviour even after warnings and short suspensions. Where a serious case of indiscipline has occurred and the Principal is recommending expulsion, he/she will

- (a) Organise a full investigation and prepare a report for the Board of Management
- (b) Make a formal expulsion recommendation to the Board with supporting evidence.
- (c) Inform the parent(s)/guardian(s) of his/her intention to recommend expulsion to the Board.
- (d) Invite the parent(s)/guardian(s) to make a written submission to the Board.
- (e) Provide the parent(s)/guardian(s) with a written copy of the allegations being made against the student and a summary of the case being made at the Board meeting.
- (f) Invite the parent(s)/guardian(s) to the Board meeting.

Expulsion may only occur after the Board has:

- (a) Heard the evidence from the Principal/parent(s)/guardian(s) [and student where he/she so desires] at the Board meeting.
- (b) Examined all the documentation presented.
- (c) Considered the student's total record in the school.
- (d) Made a formal decision to expel and communicated this decision in writing to the parent(s)/guardian(s) through the Board secretary.

The Board will inform the Education Welfare Officer under Section 24 (1) of the Education Welfare Act.

Appeal to the Department of Education and Skills against expulsion.

Under Section 29 of the Education Act a parent/guardian or student over 18 may exercise the right of appeal to the Secretary General of the Department of Education and Skills in a case where the Board of Management decides to expel a student. The Board shall advise the parent/guardian in writing of this right of appeal and shall furnish the parent/guardian with the appeal form. If the Board of Management decides to expel a student from the school, it shall, before expelling the student concerned notify the relevant Education Welfare Officer or the National Education Welfare Board in writing of its decision and the reasons for the expulsion. An expulsion shall not take effect before the passing of twenty school days following the above written notifications. The Board of Management is entitled to suspend the student during this process. The school takes into consideration the rights of the individual student and balances these with the common good and rights of other students.