



ADMISSIONS POLICY

Mission Statement

Our school exists to provide a balanced and holistic education for each of our students. Our aim is to enable and empower students to acquire the self-confidence, academic qualifications, life skills and attitudes for leading satisfying lives which should contribute to the betterment of the Church and society. We regard ourselves as a Christian community where the values of the Gospel find daily expression in our Catholic ethos and all our policies and practices as we nourish a spirituality of compassion, justice and forgiveness.

Scope

This document sets out the policy of the school in respect of admissions to the school in the following circumstances:

- Students applying for a place in First Year
- Students from outside of the school applying for a place in any other year-group or programme
- Students applying to transfer from another second-level school
- Students applying to repeat any year of any programme within the school, including repeating the Leaving Certificate programme
- Students from within the school applying for a place on any programme within the school

Rationale

This policy aims to ensure that appropriate procedures are in place to enable the school

- To make decisions on all applications in an open and transparent manner consistent with our Ethos, the Mission Statement of the School and legislative requirements

- To make an accurate and appropriate assessment of the capacity of the school to cater for the needs of applicants in the light of the resources available to it and
- To put in place a framework which will ensure effective and productive relations between students, parents and teachers where a student is admitted to the school

The school operates within the context and parameters of Department of Education & Skills (DES) regulations and programmes and the funding and resources available. The school is a Diocesan school and acknowledges the rights of the Trustees as set out in the Education Act 1998.

School Resources

The financial resources of the school are provided by a combination of grants from the Department of Education & Skills, voluntary contributions from parents and the Parent's Council and fund raising. The teaching resources are provided by the Department of Education & Skills and may be supplemented from time to time by the Board of Management where financial resources allow.

Admission to the school is, of course, subject to the resources available to the school including classroom accommodation, class size, teaching resources and financial resources and subject to the capacity of the school to provide for the needs of those who apply for admission. Where the school lacks the necessary resources to meet the needs of any applicant or student it will make every effort to secure those resources – where the resources cannot be secured the school reserves the right to refuse admission or to postpone admission until necessary resources have been provided by the Department of Education & Skills.

The implementation of the curriculum, the pastoral care programme, the school improvement plan and of school policies must have due regard to resources and funding available. The school follows the curricular programmes prescribed by the DES, which may be amended from time to time, in accordance with Sections 9 and 30 of the Education Act 1998.

School Details

St. Mary's Knockbeg College is an All Boys Voluntary Secondary School, under the trusteeship of The Diocese of Kildare & Leighlin and grant aided by the DES. A Board of Management appointed by the Trustees manages the school. The Board, which operates under the Articles of Management for Catholic Voluntary Secondary Schools, comprises 8 members - four trustee nominees, two parent nominees and two teacher nominees.

Curriculum

The following programmes are offered by the school –

- Three Year Junior Certificate Programme
- One Year Transition Year Programme
- Two Year Established Leaving Certificate Programme
- Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP)

Curriculum Subjects on Offer at Junior Cycle include:-
English, Irish, History, Geography, History, Science, French, German, Business Studies, Technical Graphics, Music, Art, Religion, SPHE, CSPE & Physical Education.

Curriculum Subjects on Offer at Junior Cycle include:-
English, Irish, History, Geography, History, French, German, Physics, Chemistry, Biology, Agricultural Science, Business, Accountancy, Economics, Religious Education, Design & Communication Graphics, Art, Music & Physical Education.

St. Mary's Knockbeg College encourages all students to take Transition Year. However in some instances the school may have to advise particular students against taking Transition Year as outlined in the Transition Year Admissions Policy. Students need to have demonstrated acceptable standards of behaviour and attitude in Junior Cycle and be able to show a degree of self-learning, self-responsibility and motivation as befits the Transition Year Programme. The School Management reserves the right to refuse admission into Transition Year and to insist that students go directly to 5th year.

Existing students of the school will have first call on places in Transition Year. All applicants from outside the school will be dealt with on the basis of ability to meet necessary standards of behaviour and attitude as described above and on a first come first served basis.

Extra-Curricular Activities

Students participate in a wide range of activities annually which may include - Athletics, Basketball Tournaments, Debating & Public Speaking, Gaelic Football, Rugby, Badminton, Quizzes, Pope John Paul II awards, GAISCE (The President's Awards), Young Scientist, Tourism, Chess, Green Schools.

Adventure, Educational and Social School tours are also a regular feature of school life. The extra-curricular activities available may vary from year to year depending on availability of teachers, etc.

Procedures – Application, Enrolment Criteria & Decision, Appeals

Application for First Year

Our admission procedures are in keeping with the characteristic spirit of the school and are in accordance with the Religious and Educational Philosophy of The Diocese of Kildare & Leighlin. It complies with all current legislation such as the Education Act 1998, Education Welfare Act 2000, and Equal Status Act 2000.

How to Apply

Application Forms are available from the school office and are available on request. Application form can also be downloaded from the school website. The Board of Management will advise the general public of the availability of this policy through the school website which is available on request. The closing date for receipt of forms will be advised each year. An application for succeeding years can be made at any time.

Late applications will be kept on file and considered only when all applicants who applied on time have been considered.

Parents should complete and sign the application form, giving all of the details required. Incomplete forms will be returned to parents. Parents should sign the application form and date it. When the school receives an application form, properly completed, it will be marked with the date (and time if appropriate) on which it was received.

Parents may be required to furnish information regarding their child's educational progress at a later date and/or to cooperate with the school's attempts to identify the educational or other relevant needs of the child. The school may wish to meet with an applicant and her/his Parent(s)/guardian(s) or guardians to discuss the needs of the applicant.

Failure to fully complete the application form, failure to supply any relevant documentation requested by the school or failure to make a reasonable arrangement to meet with the school to discuss the application may result in a child being refused admission to the school. In all cases the regulations of the Department of Education & Skills will be followed –

- (a) The applicant must have reached 12 years of age on January in the calendar year following his entry into First year (An original Birth Certificate is replied).
- (b) The applicant must have completed 6th class in a primary school or the equivalent in another jurisdiction.
- (c) The applicant must be willing, with his Parent(s)/guardian(s)/Guardian(s), to accept in writing the College ethos as set out in the Religious and Educational Philosophy of the school ie. Subscribe to the Catholic ethos.
- (d) The applicant must be willing, with his Parent(s)/guardian(s)/Guardian(s), to accept in writing, the College's Code of Behaviour (see appendix 1).
- (e) Details of relevant medical conditions are required.
- (f) Details of disabilities or any special educational needs of the student are required.
- (g) Relevant information, if applicable, regarding student custody, access arrangements and court orders pertaining to the student is required.
- (h) The applicant must take an Assessment Test prior to entry.
- (i) Completed entry application forms must be accompanied by a non-refundable deposit which will be determined from time to time by the Board of Management.

The school will normally organise an Open Night / Information Evening so that parents may inform themselves about the school.

Decision Making Process

Decisions regarding admissions are a matter for the Board of Management. However, this task 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.

Parents will be informed within 21 days of the closing date for applications as to the success or otherwise of the application made.

The Board of Management may set a figure each year for the number of students to be accepted into First Year – that figure will depend on the overall number of students in the school and the overall capacity for which the school was designed.

As a Catholic school we have an obligation to provide Catholic students with an education and formation in Catholic faith. We also have a long tradition of welcoming students of other faiths and facilitating, where possible, their spiritual and moral growth. Such accommodation of students of other denominations and faiths can only occur in so far as their needs do not impinge on the ethos of the school.

Allocation of Places

Decisions made in relation to allocation of places are in accordance with:

- Criteria as laid down by the Board of Management (These will apply if the number of applicants exceeds the number of places.
- Department of Education and Skills Rules.
- Department of Education and Skills provision of staff
- Department of Education and Skills provision of resources to meet the needs of students with special needs.
- Department of Education and Skills provision of physical space in relation to classroom accommodation and health and safety of the students.

Criteria, in order of priority, for allocation of places (these will apply if the number of applicants exceeds the number of places available).

1. Brothers of present/past students (provided application is in by the due date). A past student is any person who completed the Junior or Leaving Certificate course in the school.
2. Sons of past pupils (provided application is in by due date).
3. Sons of staff members (provided application is in by due date).
4. Special circumstances to be decided at the discretion of the Principal/Board of Management, may apply.
5. All other boys on a first come first served basis.

Note: In relation to first come first served the date of receipt of all applications will be recorded. Where a number of applicants are received on the same day a place will be determined by a lottery supervised by two external observers.

Late Applications

Late applicants will be placed on a waiting list on a first come, first served basis. An application form with all relevant information must be submitted. There must be compliance with the selection criteria. A place will be offered depending on the availability of a place in the school in accordance with the above listed criteria.

Students with Special Needs

Every reasonable effort will be made to accommodate students with special needs in so far as school resources, supported by the Department of Education and Skills, will allow. In order to assist in establishing the educational and training needs relevant to his disability or special needs, the Board will request a copy of the child's relevant medical/psychological report and will require a professional assessment.

The Board will use the resources, both financial and personnel, provided by the Department of Education and Skills to provide reasonable accommodation for students with disabilities or special educational needs up to a nominal cost. Applicants are advised that further resources cannot be guaranteed.

If the Board considers that further resources are required, the Department of Education & Skills will be requested to provide the resources eg. Special needs assistant, specialised equipment or furniture, transport etc.

The school authorities will meet the parents/guardians to discuss the student's needs and the school's capacity to meet these needs.

The school may contact the student's current National or Secondary School to ascertain their knowledge of the student's needs, including special educational needs. The school will seek knowledge of and copies of all information and reports relevant to the student's special educational needs. Where relevant information is not made available by parents or guardians, the school may determine that it is unable to make an accurate assessment of the needs of the student and may decline to accept the student into the school

The Board cannot guarantee that it will be able to meet all of the student's needs if the Department of Education and Skills does not make the necessary resources available to the school.

It may take some time for the Department of Education and Skills to process applications. Parent(s)/guardian(s) are advised to inform the school as early as possible and discuss the situation well in advance of making an application.

Should it prove impossible to provide the necessary resources to cater for the needs of the student and/or if the nature and degree of those needs are such that to enrol the student concerned would be inconsistent with the best interests of the student concerned and the effective provision of education for the other students in the school then the Board reserves the right to refuse or postpone an application for a place in the school.

Information concerning students with special needs enrolled in the school will be given to class, resource and support teachers at the beginning of the academic year, enabling staff to provide appropriate and immediate support.

Decisions on enrolment are made in accordance with the provisions of the Education Welfare Act 2000 (section 19, (3) (see appendix 3) and the Equal Status Act 2000.

Parent(s)/guardian(s) of prospective students will be informed in writing of the Principals decision within 21 days of receiving such information as is prescribed by the minister under the Act.

Acceptance of places

General

All admissions are subject to the approval of the Principal. The Principal acting on behalf of the Board of Management reserves the right to refuse an application for admission in exceptional circumstances. Such an exceptional case could include the following:

- (a) The student has special needs such that, even with additional resources available from the Department of Education and Skills, the school cannot meet such needs and/or provide the student with an appropriate education.
- (b) In the opinion of the Board of Management the student poses an unacceptable risk to other students, to school staff or school property.

The final decision with regard to enrolment of students in Knockbeg College, Carlow and with regard to all matters covered in this admissions policy lies with the Board of Management. The Board of Management reserves the right to review and amend the Enrolment and Admissions Policy from time to time.

Parents Rights

In accordance with Sections 28 and 29 of the Education Act 1998, parents/guardians of applicants who are not enrolled in the school may appeal the decision to the Board of Management in the first instance and subsequently, if necessary, to the Department of Education and Skills. A copy of the appeal form will be provided by the school.

Acceptance of Places

Applicants who are being offered places will be invited to confirm in writing acceptance or otherwise within a designated time span of the posting of the offer, along with a non-refundable sum to be set against administration costs. Failure to comply with this will result in the offer being withdrawn. At this point, Parent(s)/guardian(s)/Guardian(s) are asked to provide two passport size photographs of their son in order to facilitate school administration.

Admissions Procedures to Year Groups other than First Year

(Including applications to transfer from other schools)

Application from Parent(s)/Guardian(s) of student enrolled in other second level schools will be considered if there are vacancies in the appropriate subject – group/class/year.

Application must be made on a Knockbeg College application form which can be obtained from the college on request. All applications must include details of prior second level education; including copies of the two most recent school reports which contain the results of in-house examinations. Where an applicant has attended more than one second-level school it

may be required to submit reports from each school. Where it is deemed appropriate it may be required to submit copies of the results of any state examinations.

The Principal may contact previous schools attended, requesting further relevant information such as behaviour, attendance, educational progress, special needs etc., in relation to the applicant.

A further form may be required from the previous school to accompany the application in relation to the applicants his educational progress.

Where the school considers it to be necessary the school may require an applicant to provide a current education 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.

Parent(s)/guardian(s)/Guardian(s) who request a place for their son will be asked to attend for interview with him to discuss the application with the Principal. Places are not guaranteed. All applications will normally be referred to the Board of Management before a final decision is made.

Decision Making Process

Decisions regarding admissions are a matter for the Board of Management. However, this task 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.

Admissions for any school year will be considered as soon as possible after the application is received. The school will respond to each application as soon as possible after receiving it but may not be in a position to make a decision on some applications until later in the school year. A decision will be made in respect of each application following the timing above and the selection criteria set out below.

The school authorities must have as their first concern the welfare of those who are currently pupils of St. Mary's Knockbeg College and for whom, therefore, this school was their first choice.

The school will only make an offer of a place in a year other than 1st Year after taking due cognisance of the best interests of those who constitute the pupil body of the school. The school management will have due regard as to the effect on class size, the dynamic of a particular group, discipline etc. The school will only make an offer of such a place where it is considered advisable to do so. This applies also to those who have left the school and who subsequently wish to return to the school.

The behaviour record of a student in his previous school shall be an important factor. The school reserves the right to refuse to admit a student whose behaviour in his previous school has been unsatisfactory. The attendance record of a student in his previous school shall also be an important factor.

The school will also consider the move in the best interests of the student under the following criteria –

- Consequences of transfer
- Subject choices/levels
- Reason for move, etc.
- No pupil is admitted to a year other than 1st year without a satisfactory reference from the principal of his/her current secondary school.
- That the school authorities are satisfied with the reasons for the transfer being in the best interest of the student and not detrimental to the interests of the students already in the school.
- The possible problems and disruption of studies when moving into an established class and year group will be considered. The situation may arise where a student may have to take up or discontinue a subject.
- That space is available in the school, in particular with specialist classes where the capacity is limited.
- Parent(s)/guardian(s)/Guardian(s) and their son must sign Code of Behaviour and Rules of the school, thereby agreeing to accept and uphold them.
- The school will not normally accept students into final year Leaving Certificate or final year Junior Certificate programmes except in cases of exceptional circumstances.
- Second Level schools in the local area all operate under the Department of Education & Skills and have access to apply for the same supports and facilities. They are governed by the same legislation and so only students with sound educational reasons for changing from his/hers first choice of school will be considered.

Students will only be accepted at the beginning of the school year other than in the exceptional circumstances of a family moving into the local area.

Right of Appeal

In accordance with Sections 28 and 29 of the Education Act 1998, parents/guardians of applicants who are not enrolled in the school may appeal the decision to the Board of Management in the first instance and subsequently, if necessary, to the Secretary General of the Department of Education and Skills. A copy of the appeal form will be provided by the school.

Admission to specific programmes or subjects (or level)

From time to time it may arise that the demand for a particular subject or at a specific level for any subject or for a particular programme may exceed the number of places normally available on that programme. The school will make every effort - within the constraints of the accommodation, teaching resources, accommodation and equipment – to accommodate all such students. Where all students cannot be accommodated the following shall apply

- Priority will be given to students from within the school
- Priority will be given to students who return fully completed application forms by the dates specified by the school.

Where it is not possible to accommodate all applicants

- Entry to specific subject levels will be determined by the student's previous performance at that subject relative to the other applicants; his/hers results in state examinations where available will also be considered.
- Entry to specific subjects will be determined by reference to the preferences indicated by students on his/her application form and by reference to the student's previous performance at that subject relative to the other applicants; his/her results in state examinations where available will also be considered. Where this does not satisfactorily resolve the issue, the school may survey the students' previous teacher(s) about his/her suitability for the subject or alternative subjects and the school may also take into account the availability of other suitable subjects available to competing applicants.
- Entry to specific programmes will be determined following a review of the application forms and an interview process designed to ascertain the relative suitability of the applicants for the specific programme. Where this does not satisfactorily resolve the issue, the school may survey the students' previous teachers about their suitability for the programme. The school may also take into account the availability of other suitable courses within the school to competing applicants.

Right of Appeal

Where a student is refused admission to a specific programme his parents will be advised of their right to appeal that decision to the Board of Management in the first instance and subsequently the Secretary General of the Department of Education and Skill. A copy of the appeal form will be provided by the school.

Admission to repeat a year

All such applications are subject to the relevant Department of Education & Skills Guidelines. The Department normally restricts students to a maximum of six years at second level and does not allow students to repeat a year unless there are exceptional circumstances.

- Applications to repeat a year will be considered in the light of DES Circulars & Guidelines.
- Applications will also be considered in the light of places available on the relevant programme.
- Applications will not be considered until the written application and supporting documentation have been submitted to the school.
- The school must be satisfied that the applicant, in light of the special circumstances that gave rise to the application, applied him/herself to the best of their ability.
- Students taking a programme for the first time may be given priority in terms of subject choices within the programme.

Admission to repeat the Leaving Certificate Programme

The school does not operate a Repeat Leaving Certificate Programme. It does not provide any additional teaching resources to cover material normally covered in Year 1 of the Leaving

Certificate Programme. St. Mary's Knockbeg College students who do apply to repeat the Leaving Certificate at the school will be considered:-

- In the light of places available in the relevant subjects, the overall programme and overall enrolment within the school.
- In the light of the students previous behaviour & academic record, application to studies, attendance etc.
- Applications to repeat a year will be considered in the light of DES Circulars & Guidelines.

Ratified by the Board of Management

Chairperson Board of Management

Date:

Appendix 1

Include this and Code of Behaviour.

Appendix 2

Equal Status Act Section 7 (3) (c)

“An educational Establishment does not discriminate where the establishment is a school providing primary or post-primary education and the objective of the school is to provide education in an environment which promotes certain religious values, it admits persons of a particular religious denomination in preference to others or it refuses to admit a person who is not of that denomination and, in the case of a refusal, it is proved that the refusal is essential to maintain the ethos of the school.”

Appendix 3

Education Welfare Act Section 19

(1) The Board of Management of a recognised school shall not refuse to admit as a student in such school a child, in respect of whom an application to be so admitted has been made, except where such refusal is in accordance with the policy of the recognised school concerned published under section 15 (2) (d) of the Act of 1998.

(2) The parent of a child who has made an application referred to in *subsection (1)* shall provide the recognised school concerned such information as may be prescribed by the Minister.

(3) As soon as practicable, but not later than 21 days, after a parent has provided, in accordance with *subsection (2)*, such information as may be prescribed by the Minister thereunder, the Board of Management of the school concerned shall make a decision in respect of the application concerned and inform the parent in writing thereof.”

APPENDIX 4

The special class for children with Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) has been developed with the co-operation and support of the NCSE and the DES. The class will cater for the catchment area of St. Mary’s, Knockbeg College and can accommodate a maximum of 6 students (boys) who have a diagnosis of ASD in each of the two classes.

- DES policy dictates that all ability levels should be catered for within the ASD class. The Board of Management supports such a policy unless the nature and degree of the needs of the student are 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. Students with severe behavioural difficulties will not be enrolled.
- Parent(s)/Guardians who wish to enrol their son into first year should make contact with the Principal Knockbeg prior to the Open Day of the academic year

when the child is in 6th class Primary School. Applications for the class must be returned to the office on or before the closing date for first year applications. The school is obliged to make it clear that no late applications can be considered for the class particularly when places for first year are oversubscribed.

- Parent(s)/Guardians must attend an interview with the Principal and provide all relevant documents pertaining to their child's diagnosis and to their previous schooling/education. The diagnosis must be in accordance with DSM IV or ICD 10 for resourcing and documentation must also have a recommendation for a "special class placement" (NCSE requirements).
- All ASD class applicants must hold a current Psychological report stating the nature of their ASD with a current ASD Class Referral Letter.
- Where a report outlining the student's care or educational needs is deemed inadequate or out of date the Principal/Board of Management may insist that the family obtain an up to date educational and or psychological report.
- As places within the ASD class are limited (total of 6 in each class) the school shall run a lottery to determine the order in which places can be filled if there are more qualified applicants than places available.
- Participation in the ASD class will be subject to ongoing review.
- Transfers from other second level schools to the ASD class will be in line with the requirements of the Knockbeg admissions policy and applicants also satisfying the criteria for ASD class.
- A decision to enrol a student in the ASD class will be made by the Board of Management and a decision by the Board is final.
- Students who are enrolled in this class will follow the normal 1st, 2nd, 3rd, Leaving 1 and Leaving 2 programme (5 years). Students will be registered with the relevant year group.