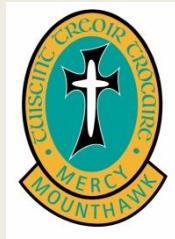


Admission Policy of Mercy Secondary School Mounthawk

School Address: Mounthawk, Tralee, Co. Kerry

Roll number: 68070E

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, students and with parents of children attending the school.

The policy was approved by the school patron on 19th August 2020. 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 the Mercy Secondary School Mounthawk 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. (*See Appendix 2*).

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 the school

Mercy Secondary School Mounthawk 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 Mounthawk 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 Mounthawk 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(s) Catherine McAuley of the Mercy Religious Order who began this school is of very significant importance in the life of the school.

As a CEIST school, Mercy Secondary School Mounthawk 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 Mounthawk 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 Mounthawk 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. *Please see Appendix 1 for more details on the nature of the school and programmes available.*

Education has as its goal the formation of a human person who is free, rational and mature in relationships. Mercy Secondary School Mounthawk 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 Mounthawk 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.

Based on the Catholic tradition of the school our school community in Mercy Mounthawk has developed the following Mission statement as a guiding statement for our work in this school:

‘Mercy Mounthawk Catholic Voluntary Secondary School is a witnessing community which fosters:

- *The full potential of all staff and students*
- *A positive partnership between all members of the school and wider community*
- *The highest standards of teaching, learning and performance.’*

3. Admission Statement

Mercy Secondary School Mounthawk 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.

Post-primary denominational schools

Mercy Secondary School Mounthawk 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 Denomination in preference to others.

All denominational schools

Mercy Secondary School Mounthawk 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 a member of the Catholic Denomination and it is proved that the refusal is essential to maintain the ethos of the school.

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

4. Categories of Special Educational Needs catered for in the school/special class

Mercy Secondary School Mounthawk, with the approval of the Minister for Education and Skills, has established classes to provide an education exclusively for students with a diagnosis of Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) who are in possession of a psychological report that explicitly states that they require the support of such a special class. Admission to this Special Class (Autism) is subject also to the sanction of the NCSE.

Please see Section 19 of this policy which outlines the admissions process for admission to our One class is designated for students in Senior cycle and the other for Junior Cycle. Access to Special Classes will depend on the availability of places at the time of application.

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
- c) Mercy Secondary School Mounthawk is a Catholic Voluntary Secondary School and may refuse to admit as a student a person who is not of the Catholic Denomination where it is proved that the refusal is essential to maintain the ethos of the school.
- d) The student will not meet the age criterion of 12 years by January of the first year as per DE requirements.

6. Oversubscription

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 in section 6.3 to those applications that are received within the timeline for receipt of applications as set out in the school's annual admission notice:

6.1 Application.

Parents and guardians who wish to have their child considered for enrolment as a first year student must complete a Registration Form on or before the closing date for applications. (*Please see the Annual Admissions Notice for 2025/26 – Appendix 2 of this policy*)

- The Registration Form for 1st year enrolment will be available from through the Enrolment page on the school's website.
 - The digital forms must be fully completed and signed by parents/guardians before submission.
 - In the case of siblings, a separate application form (and ticket) will be issued for each applicant.¹
 - A separate Registration Form must be filled by any students wishing to apply for a place in the school's Special Class (Autism). (*See section 19 of this policy for more details*).
 - Forms to be returned through the on-line registration system only. If you have any difficulty with this process, please ring the school at 066 7102550 or email the school for assistance.
 - Once processed, you will receive a confirmation of receipt of the application to the e-mail address that you have sent it from. If you do not receive this confirmation, please contact the school to inquire.
 - Applications received before the closing date for applications will be considered as valid applications. (*see section 14 below regarding late applications*).
- Specific details on the admissions process are contained in Appendix 3 of this policy.*

¹ In relation to twins, the following choice will be offered to parents: either the names of the two students will be entered on the same ticket for the selection process, in which case when the ticket is pulled, both students will be offered places at that point in the sequence OR the names can be entered separately on two tickets, in which case each twin will be treated separately and the offer of a place to one will not automatically mean the offer of a place to the other. A memo recording the choice will be signed by parents.

6.2 Open Day

An Open Day will be held, and will be advertised in the local community.

6.3 Process of Offer of Places for applicants to 1st year

The school will operate **two application processes in tandem**: the main enrolment process and a process for the Special class (Autism). A student who wishes to apply for the special class must also *apply for and secure a place in* the main stream of the school. Please see section 19 of the policy in relation to the application process for the Special class (Autism).²

Where the number of applicants exceeds the number of places available, (see the Annual Admissions notice), places will be offered in accordance with these criteria in the following order of priority:

1st . Siblings of current students of Mounthawk and siblings of students who completed their post-primary education in Mounthawk, Balloonagh and Moyderwell Secondary Schools.

2nd. Children and grandchildren of Board Members and of staff members who are directly employed by the Board of Management on the date of enrolment and on the 1st of September of the student's year of entry. (*See section 7f below*)

3rd. Students who are registered in 6th class in Balloonagh and Moyderwell Primary schools at the time of application.

80% of the places remaining after the allocation of places under the 1st and 2nd criteria will be allocated to students in this category. The number of places will be allocated to each school in proportion to the number of applicants from each school. For each school, places will be allocated on the basis of number of years enrolled in the school, as follows:

Places will be offered first to students who have spent 8 years on the DES roll for the school (i.e. from junior infants), next to those who have spent 7 years, 6 years down to those who have spent 1 year. In following this process, if and when at any point the number of applicants, with the same number of years in the school, exceeds the number of places remaining, these remaining places will be distributed by lottery among these students. Any remaining applicants who do not qualify for this lottery will be included under the 4th criterion.

4th. The remaining 20% of places will be allocated to all other applicants (including applicants from Balloonagh and Moyderwell who did not qualify for inclusion in the lottery under the 3rd criterion) on the basis of a lottery among all the valid applicants – (*as defined in section 6.1 above*).

6.4 Operation of the random selection process

The random selection process (lottery) will be overseen by a panel appointed by the Board of Management consisting of a representative of the Board (the Principal), a representative of the Parents' Council and an independent scrutineer appointed by the Board.

² This approach is based on section 2 of the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs (EPSEN) Act 2004, which requires that: "A child with special educational needs shall be educated in an inclusive environment with children who do not have such needs unless the nature or degree of those needs of the child is such that to do so would be inconsistent with the best interests of the child as determined in accordance with any assessment carried out or the effective provision of education for children with whom the child is to be educated."

The name of each student entitled to participate in this selection process will be included in a separate draw for each of the two schools under the 3rd criterion and for applicants from other schools under the 4th criterion).

A member of the panel will draw names from each container, one by one, until the maximum number of places allocated for each school under criterion 3 and all the schools in under criterion 4 is reached.

The order in which the names are drawn from each container will be recorded on a numbered list. Places will be offered in the order in which names are drawn from the container until the allotment of places in each category has been filled.

The remaining names on each list (i.e. those students who have not received places in that category) will remain on a waiting list within the category and will be offered places in order should such places become available within the category. These waiting lists will remain in place until the ending of the last day that the school is open for tuition in that academic year.

In the event that there are two or more students tied for a place or places in any of the selection criteria categories above (the number of applicants exceeds the number of remaining places), the following arrangements will apply:

In following this process under 6.3 (third criterion), if and when at any point the number of applicants, with the same number of years in the school, exceeds the number of places remaining, these remaining places will be distributed by lottery among these students. Any remaining applicants who do not qualify for this lottery will be included under the 4th criterion.

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;
- (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 those connections specified under section 6.3 above in the 1st and 2nd criteria. *(Please note that under the act, numbers under the 2nd criterion can only apply to a maximum of 25% of the available spaces as set out in the school's annual admission notice).*
- (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. *(All such applications are considered valid).*

8. Decisions on applications

All decisions on applications for admission to [school name] 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 Mounthawk 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 Mounthawk 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.
- (v) 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 than places available, a waiting list of students whose applications for admission to Mercy Secondary School Mounthawk 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 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.

This Waiting List will remain active until the ending on the last day that the school is open for tuition in that academic year.

Offers of any subsequent places that become available during the academic year in 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.

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 this Admissions Policy, the Education Admissions to School Act 2018 and any regulations made under that Act.

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 to be considered after the applications from valid applicants have been dealt with. (Valid applicant are those which have been received before the closing date in accordance with the details of the Annual admissions Notice). This waiting list will function under the procedures outlined in section 13 above.

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.

15. Procedures for admission of students to other years and during the school year

15.1 The procedures of the school in relation to the admission of students who are not already admitted to the school to classes or years other than the school's intake group are as follows:

15.1.a Where a student wishes to transfer from another second level school *at the start of the school year*, or is currently not in a school or has been removed from a school, an application must be made using the correct application form to the Principal. This form must be processed with the P or DP and a receipt issued for the application.

The reason for the requested transfer or application must be clearly stated (see the application form). The application should be accompanied by appropriate references to include (a) a progress report and (b) a reference from the Principal of the previous school as per section 20 of the Education Welfare Act. The school reserves the right to consult with the school(s) from which the student is transferring.

15.1.b Applications in this category are considered following the order in which they are received by the school. In offering places the following sequence will be implemented:

- (i) Priority is given to applications from students who are from outside the Tralee catchment area and are changing domicile into the Tralee catchment area and who do not have a second level educational place within the Tralee catchment area at the time of the change of domicile.

(ii) Next offers are made to students with siblings already in the school subject to the criteria outlined in 15.1.d below.

(iii) Next offers are made to students who have no school place and who live within the Tralee catchment area.

(iv) Next offers are made to applicants for transfer from other schools within the Tralee catchment. Applications from students who have educational places in the Tralee area will be processed for the start of a new school year only.

15.1.c The allocation of a place shall not cause the overall number of students in the school to exceed the overall number set by the Board of Management as a cap/quota and submitted to the DES at the time of application.

Should the overall number in the school (current or projected – in the case of applications for the next school year) be below the number set, applicants can then be considered based on the sequence outlined above. In each case a transfer(s) can only be accommodated subject to a place in the relevant year group or class being available. Reference will also be made to availability and suitability of subjects or course choices in the relevant year group.

15.1.d All applications above will be subject to the following criteria:

- The application will be considered if the school is satisfied with the reason for transfer.
- 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.

15.1.e A decision on the application will be made in accordance with this policy and will be communicated to the parent/guardian within 21 days of the receipt of the written application. Any refusal of an application may be appealed in accordance with procedures in section 18 below.

A waiting list for admission to years (other than the intake group) will be established from the start of the school year and remain in place until the last day the school is open for tuition in that academic year.

Pursuant to the provisions of Section 20 of the Education (Welfare) Act 2000, where the Principal registers a student who is already registered in another recognised school, he/she is obliged to give written notification of the transfer to the Principal of the school in which the student was previously registered and the Principal of that other school must notify the Principal of any problems relating to school attendance that the student concerned had while attending the other school and such other matters relating to the student's educational progress as he or she considers appropriate.

Students who opt to transfer to another 2nd level school will have no automatic right of re-entry should they change their mind and indicate a wish to return to Mercy Secondary School Mounthawk. However priority will be given to such students who are returning from outside the catchment area in accordance with 5.1.b.(i) above.

15.2 The procedures of the school in relation to the admission of students who are not already admitted to the school, after the commencement of the school year in which admission is sought, are as follows:

15.2.a Where a student wishes to transfer from another second level school *during the school year*, or is currently not in a school or has been removed from a school, an application must be made using the correct application form to the Principal. This form must be handed in person to the Principal or Deputy and signed on submission.

The reason for the requested transfer must be clearly stated (see the application form). The application should be accompanied by appropriate references to include (a) a progress report and (b) a reference from the Principal of the previous school as per section 20 of the Education Welfare Act. The school reserves the right to consult with the school(s) from which the student is transferring in order to request a confidential reference, thereby to assess the application.

15.2.b In deciding on applications the following sequence will be followed.

(i) Priority is given to applications from students who are from outside the Tralee catchment area and are changing domicile into the Tralee catchment area and who do not have a second level educational place within the Tralee catchment area at the time of the change of domicile.

(ii) Next offers are made to students with siblings already in the school subject to the criteria outlined in 15.1.d below.

(iii) Next offers are made to students who have no school place and who live within the Tralee catchment area.

(iv) Next offers are made to applicants for transfer from other schools within the Tralee catchment. Applications from students who have educational places in the Tralee area will be processed for the start of a new school year only.

15.2.c The allocation of a place shall not cause the overall number of students in the school to exceed the overall number set by the Board of Management as a cap/quota and submitted to the DES at the time of application.

Should the overall number in the school (current or projected – in the case of applications for the next school year) be below the number set, applicants can then be considered based on the sequence outlined above. In each case a transfer(s) can only be accommodated subject to a place in the relevant year group or class being available. Reference will also be made to availability and suitability of subjects or course choices.

15.2.d All applications above will be subject to the following criteria:

- The application will be considered if the school is satisfied with the reason for transfer.
- 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.

15.2.e A decision on the application will be made in accordance with this policy and will be communicated to the parent/guardian within 21 days of the receipt of the written application. Any refusal of an application may be appealed in accordance with procedures in section 18 below.

A list for admission to years (other than the intake group) will be established from the start of the school year and remain in place until the last day the school is open for tuition in that academic year.

Pursuant to the provisions of Section 20 of the Education (Welfare) Act 2000, where the Principal registers a student who is already registered in another recognised school, he/she is obliged to give written notification of the transfer to the Principal of the school in which the student was previously registered and the Principal of that other school must notify the Principal of any problems relating to school attendance that the student concerned had while attending the other school and such other matters relating to the student's educational progress as he or she considers appropriate.

Students who opt to transfer to another 2nd level school will have no automatic right of re-entry should they change their mind and indicate a wish to return to Mercy Secondary School Mounthawk. However priority will be given to such students who are returning from outside the catchment area in accordance with 5.2.b.(i) above.

15.3 Application to Repeat a Year

Parents/guardians of students who wish their child(ren) to repeat a year must apply in writing to the Principal of the school before the 1st of May in the current academic year. The closing date for applications is 31st May as per Department of Education circular M2/95

In allocating places to repeat a year, the school will follow the details of circular M2/95 from the department. When filling the application form, parents must provide supporting documentation.

16. Declaration in relation to the non-charging of fees

The Board of Mercy Secondary School Mounthawk or any persons acting on its behalf shall not, except in accordance with section 64 of the Education (Admission to Schools) Act 2018, 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 Mounthawk without attending religious instruction should make a written request to the Principal. A meeting will be 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. Reviews/appeals

18.1 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.

18.2 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 18.1 above*)

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.

19. Special Class (Autism) Provision

19.1 Introduction

Admission to the special class for students with Autistic Spectrum Disorder is governed by a policy and procedures additional to the general Admissions Policy outlined in this section of the general Admissions Policy. For academic and management reasons, our two classes are designated junior and senior and prioritised for students in those year groups. Admission is dependent on the number of places available in the special classes.

19.2. Eligibility for enrolment in the Special class for Autism

A student may be accepted for admission into the Special class (Autism) when all of the following criteria have been met:

a) a student applying for a place in the facility must have a psychological/psychiatric report that clearly specifies a diagnosis of Autism. Diagnosis must be determined by the DSM 1V, ICD 10 criteria, or other recognised diagnostic tool acceptable to the Enrolment Committee. The following documents (all should be recent i.e. less than two years old) will be required also in respect of applicants seeking a place in the class.

- A current psychological report stating the suitability of a second level environment in meeting the student's needs.

Evidence available must suggest that applicants must have the adaptive skills and cognitive functioning that would enable them to learn consistently in a mainstream environment.

Additional reports from other professionals as appropriate should be included. These reports should include reports from the applicant's primary school and from any other agency or professional involved in the education of the applicant. All applications will be reviewed by the Enrolment Committee (*see 19.4*). The enrolment committee may ask for further reports or information which may impact on the applicants educational planning.

b) A student who wishes to repeat a year in the school and previously had a place in the Autism class will also have to reapply for a place.

c) Integration of students into the mainstream is the priority of the special class. Although students attached to the support class have their own base in the Special classroom (Autism), they will, when appropriate to the students' learning, attend mainstream classes both with and without SNA support. Therefore the student should be capable of a level of integration into the whole school environment.

e) By applying for a place in the Special class (Autism), parents / guardians authorise Mercy Mounthawk to contact the stated primary school in advance of any offer of a place to confirm and assess the information in the submitted educational / psychological reports from the parents / guardians with the application form. This is in keeping with the NCSE Guidelines for Setting Up and Organising Special Classes for Boards of Management and Principals of Primary and Post-Primary Schools 2016. (Page 4)

19.3 Application process and offer of places

The total capacity for the Special Class (Autism) is restricted to six students per class, as determined by the NCSE (National Council for Special Education) and the DE (Department of Education). All applications for Special Class(Autism) (whether from existing students in the school or from incoming 1st years) will be considered within the context of the school's Admission Policy.

19.3.a In relation to incoming 1st years, the general Registration for Admission form is available from the school as per the Admissions Notice. All applicants must complete this Form. A separate Registration for Admission Form for Special class for students with ASD (also available through the school website) must also be submitted. All necessary and supporting documentation (*mentioned at 19.2 above*) needs to be submitted to the school by the date specified in advance. If the documentation is not submitted, the application cannot be processed.

19.3.b. In the case of students already within the school, the separate registration from for admission to the Special Class (Autism) must be submitted. All necessary and supporting documentation (*mentioned at 19.2 above*) needs to be submitted to the school. If the documentation is not submitted, the application cannot be processed.

All registrations for Admission to the Special Class (Autism) will be considered for eligibility by the Enrolment Committee (see section 19.4 below). The completion of a written registration form for placement of your child does not confer an automatic right to placement in the Special class. Prior to acceptance, parents/guardians may be asked to attend a meeting with a member or members of the Enrolment Committee, to ensure that the needs of their child can be met within the resources available to the school.

In the case of incoming 1st years, the admissions process for the Special Class (Autism) will occur after a student has attained a place in mainstream through the main application process. As with an application for main stream in the school, the available places in the Special Class (Autism) will be offered and allocated according to the same criteria set down for the mainstream process in offering places in the case of over subscription. (*See section 6 of this policy*).

Late applications from any criteria category will be processed at the end of this process. (*See section 14 above*).

19.3.a In the case of over subscription for the Special Class (Autism)

When the number of applications exceeds the number of places available, the published selection criteria as set out at section 6.3 above will apply and a waiting list shall be compiled which shall remain valid only for the school year in respect of which the applications are made.

Where Mercy Mounthawk is in a position to offer further places that become available in the Special Class (Autism) for and during that academic year, places will be offered in accordance with the order of priority in which Students have been placed on the waiting list subject to there being a place in the relevant mainstream year group. If there is not a place available in the relevant year group, the next person on the waiting list for the Special Class will be considered for the place in question but this will not change the initial Student's place on the waiting list for the Special Class for the remainder of that school year, i.e. if another place subsequently became available in the Special Class during that school year, the initial Student at the top of the waiting list would be considered first, but again subject to there being a place in the relevant year group for that Student.

For clarity, even if a place becomes available in a given mainstream year group, if there is a waiting list for that year group, the Students on that list have first refusal at the place in the year group irrespective of any matters relating to the Special Class.

Where an application is made on behalf of a Student for both the Special Class and a mainstream year group, and his/her application for one but not both is successful, s/he will remain in the same position on the waiting list for the group to which s/he was not successful, regardless of whether the Applicant accepts the place in the group to which the Student was successful.

For the avoidance of doubt, if a Student does not receive a place in the Special Class for a given academic year, but s/he wishes to be considered for admission to Special Class in the following academic year, a new application must be made on behalf of that Student Where the school is oversubscribed, any selection criteria that are not included in this Admission Policy shall not be considered in determining whether or not a Student is admitted to the school.

19.4 The Special Class Enrolment Committee

The Board of Management (Board) takes ultimate responsibility for enrolling students with Autism in the school and in the Autism Class. The Board will establish the Special Class Enrolment Committee to consider all applications made. Members of this Committee are nominated by the Board to include the Principal, a Deputy Principal, and the Special Class Co-ordinator. The local SENO will be consulted in this process. The Principal is responsible for implementing these guidelines under the direction of the Board of Management. The role of the Committee is to advise the Board on matters relating to admissions to the special class and to perform the following duties:

(a) oversee the registration and application process for inclusion in the Special Classes as outlined in this policy

(b) As part of our annual review of the student's progress and our Autism programme's ability to meet their needs and deliver the most beneficial educational programme we adhere to the following model of evaluation: Regular assessment of: (i) the academic, social and behavioural benefits of the student being enrolled in the Autism programme (ii) the level and quality of mainstream participation, (iii) Student progress in general. In cases where it is our professional opinion that a student is not benefiting from their place in the Special Class, and it is believed, with reason, that the student may benefit more from being in mainstream, or indeed greater support than the school can provide, this will be discussed with parents and referred to the Board of Management to assess suitability for continuance on the programme. The Board may seek advice from the Special Class Enrolment Committee.

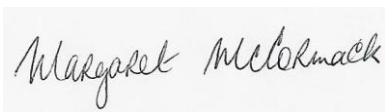
(c) Should a student leave the Special Class, for whatever reason, the Special Class Enrolment Committee will make a recommendation to the Board on how that place is to be filled. In accordance with Circular 14/2017, the management and administration of the DES resources is at the discretion of the Board of Management. Circular 14/2017 does not supersede the Board's overall responsibility to manage the school. Mercy Mounthawk School will not exceed the sanctioned number of places in each Special Class. It is the school's position that the application of Circular 14/2017 does not equate to using the DES SEN (General allocation model) annual allocation for the provision of the supports and resources equivalent to that of a specialised setting such as a designated ASD class or other DES recognised Special Class.

20. Policy review and ratification

The school reserves the right to continue to monitor the patterns of enrolment and amend this policy further at any time, if deemed necessary in order to management enrolment numbers.

This policy will be reviewed on an annual basis – in particular the Annual Admissions *Notice* (see Appendix 2 below).

Policy updated and ratified by the Board of Management on 23rd September 2024. The policy was approved by CEIST on the 1st October 2024 and adopted by the Board of Management on 1st October 2024.



Signed: _____

(Chairperson)



(Principal)

Appendix 1 - School Information

1. Management:

Members of the Board of Management

Chairperson of the Board: Ms Margaret McCormack

Parents' nominees: Mr Louis Byrne, Ms Cathy Williams

Teachers' nominees: Ms Betty Farrell and Mr Diarmuid Murphy

Trustees' nominees: Sr Bernadette Costello, Mr. Rory O'Halloran, Mr Pat McGarty and Ms. Margaret McCormack.

Secretary to the Board: Mr John O'Roarke

Principal: Mr John O'Roarke

Deputy Principals: Ms Sinead Muldoon Walsh, Mr Pat Fleming, Mr Shane Kissane.

In school councils: Parents' Council, Students' Council.

2. Teaching Resources and Curriculum

Programmes (summary):

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. The following programmes are offered:

The Junior Certificate. Core subject are English, Irish, Maths, History, S.P.H.E., C.S.P.E. and P.E. All students take Religious studies. Students may choose from the following options: History, geography, French, Spanish, German, Business Studies, Science, Design Communication Graphics, Materials Technology Wood, Materials Technology Metal, Music, Art.

We have introduced the option of allowing students to take 10 full subjects, 9 subjects and 2 short courses or 8 subjects and 4 short courses (with an IEP). In tandem with this we have launched a series of short course options in PE, SPHE and CSPE, Coding and Digital media literacy, Artistic Performance, Geography, History and Philosophy.

The Leaving Certificate. Core subject in the Leaving cert programme are English, Irish, Maths, Religion, S.P.H.E. and P.E. Students may choose from the following options: French, Spanish, German, Accounting, Economics, Business Studies, Physics, Chemistry, Biology, Applied Maths, Music, Art, Home Economics, Technical Graphics Design Communication Graphics (DCG), Building Construction and Engineering.

Leaving Cert Applied: a two-year senior Cycle programme which is available to students who wish to follow a practical or vocationally oriented programme. L.C.A. is a modular programme with continuous assessment over the two-year period.

Transition Year: Transition Year offers a broader educational experience to students focusing on taster courses and work experience.

Special Needs teachers:

The school has a dedicated Special Needs Department, who in conjunction with the three career guidance teachers look after the special educational needs of students in the school in accordance with the SEN policy.

3.5 Extra-Curricular Activities

As part of the holistic philosophy of education of the Mercy Order, the school offers a range of extra-curricular activities in order to promote the full personal development of the students. Each student in the school is encouraged to participate in extra-curricular activities.

Activities offered include: Public Speaking and Debating in English, Irish and German, Quiz teams in science, maths and general knowledge, Drama, Choir, coaching in leadership skills with the Rotary and Lions clubs.

In sports, Gaelic Football, Hurling, Basketball are organised for both boys and girls Participation in Golf, Athletics, Swimming, Handball, Badminton, and Soccer are also facilitated in the school

3.6 Administrative Information:

The school day runs from 9.005 to 3.40 Monday to Friday. Details of the weekly timetable are attached in Appendix 9.

The school Office hours are from 8.30 to 4.15 daily.

The school can be contacted on 066 7102550 during office hours.

e-mail: admin@mercymounthawk.ie

web site: www.mercymounthawk.ie

Appendix 2

MERCY SECONDARY SCHOOL MOUNTHAWK ANNUAL ADMISSION NOTICE FOR 2025/26

Copies of the school's **Admission Policy** for the 2024/25 school year are available as follows: –
To download at: <http://www.mercymounthawk.ie/information/school-policies/>

Copies of the school's **Admission Policy** and the **Application Form for Admission** for the 2025/26 school year are available on request from admin@mercymounthawk.ie Or on the school website at <http://www.mercymounthawk.ie/information/school-policies/>

1. Application and Decision Dates for admission to 1st Year for 2023/24

1.	The school will commence accepting applications for admission on	8th October 2024
2.	The school will cease accepting applications for admission on	2:00pm on 15th November 2024
3.	Applicants will be notified in writing of the decision on their application	by the 22nd November 2024
4.	Applicants must confirm acceptance of an offer of admission	By the 4th December 2024

Failure by an applicant to accept an offer by the **4th December 2024** may result in the offer being withdrawn.

2. Number of places being made available in the 2025/26 school year

The number of places being made available in 1 st year is	232
The number of residential places is (boarding schools only)	n/a
The number of non-residential places is (boarding schools only)	n/a
The number of places being made available in the special class catering for students with ASD (Autism) is <i>(please note places available at the time of publication)</i>	2

(If the school has more than one class that caters for different categories of SEN, details of the number of places for each of the classes must be provided.)

3. Number of places in 1st year for the 2024/25 school year which were offered and accepted before 1 February 2024

Number of places in 1st year for the 2024/25 school year which were offered and accepted before 1 February 2023	222
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4. Breakdown of applications in the previous year

The total number of applications for admission received by the school for admission in 1st year in the 2024/25 school year was 384

Breakdown of places allocated for 1st Year for the 2024.25 school year:	
Number of places available	222 (including 6 for Special Classes)
Number of applications received	384
Offers made and accepted under each criteria	Criteria 1: 101 offers - 91 accepted Criteria 2: 41offers - 0 accepted Criteria 3: 73 offers – 69 accepted Criteria 4: 113 offers - 56 accepted
Number of names placed on waiting list for the school year concerned	96 on waiting list

Appendix 3 Enrolment procedure for September 2025

Addendum to section 6.1 of the Policy: some details on the registration and enrolment process.

The school will hold an **OPEN DAY** in the school this year on **Saturday 19th October 2024** in accordance with section 6.2 of the policy.

The following procedures will be adopted in relation to enrolment for the 2025/26 academic year.

1. **Availability of forms:**

(i) The Registration Form for 1st year enrolment will be available from **8th October 2024**

The Registration forms and registration process will take place on-line. Please see the school Website for access to the admissions process: www.mercymounthawk.ie Instructions on the enrolment process are on the web-page.

2. **Filling and return of forms through the on-line portal**

The digital Registration Form must be *fully completed* and be *signed* by a parent/guardian of the applicant. Unsigned forms cannot be processed. Forms *cannot* be submitted by hand to the school.

Any applicant having difficulty in accessing the registration process or the digital form on-line can ring the school office on 066 7102550 or email admissions25@mercymounthawk.ie

Registration Forms will be accepted from Tuesday 8th October 2024 but MUST BE SUBMITTED by 2:00pm on 15th November 2024 in order to be considered valid applications.

3. Following registration, the procedures in section 6 to 14 and section 19 of the School's Admissions Policy will apply.

4. In accordance with section 9, a letter notifying applicants regarding their application will be issued on or before **22nd November 2024**.

5. In accordance with section 10, offers of a place must be accepted in writing **at the latest by 4th December 2024**. Failure by an applicant to accept an offer by the **4th December 2024** may result in the offer being withdrawn in accordance with section 11.

To accept a place, students must complete the **Student Enrolment Forms**.

These forms include a Health Information Section, detailed information including the Student PPS No and information as required by the Department of Education & Skills. They also contain a form confirming parent/guardian and student commitment to abide by the School's Code of Behaviour and to accept the Ethos of the school. A parent/guardian must advise the school of their acceptance of the offer of Admission by returning the signed forms on or before **4th December, 2024 at 4.00 pm**.

6. In accordance with section 13, in the event of oversubscription, a waiting list will be put in place.

7. Please note that, in accordance with section 12, the school may contact and share information with other schools in order to complete the enrolment process as is detailed in the Admissions Policy.

8. On completion of the enrolment process a request will be made for all relevant information to be made available from the student's previous school, including such matters as attendance record, behaviour issues, special education needs etc. This will assist the school in making appropriate education provision for each student.