



Admission Policy

Sacred Heart Secondary School

**Sunnyside,
Drogheda,
Co. Louth**

Roll number: 63860i

School Patron/s: CEIST

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1. Introduction

This Admission Policy complies with the requirements of the Education Act 1998, the Education (Admission to Schools) Act 2018 and the Equal Status Act 2000. In drafting this policy, the board of management of the school has consulted with school staff, the school patron and with parents of children attending the school.

The policy was approved by the school patron on 11th 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 Sacred Heart Secondary School admission process are set out in the school's annual admission notice (Appendix A) which is published annually on the school's website at least one week before the commencement of the admission process for the school year concerned.

This policy must be read in conjunction with the **Annual Admission Notice** for the school year concerned.

The application form for admission is published on the school's website and will be made available in hardcopy on request to any person who requests it.

2. Characteristic spirit and general objectives of the school

Sacred Heart Secondary School is a Catholic, all girls 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 Sacred Heart Secondary School 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.

Sacred Heart Secondary School 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 our founder, Catherine McAuley of the Mercy Order who began this school is of very significant importance in the life of the school.

As a CEIST school, Sacred Heart Secondary School 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*
-

Sacred Heart Secondary School 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). Reflective of this, Sacred Heart Secondary School provides a rich, holistic education in the Catholic tradition where engagement with and development of the whole person; the intellectual, moral, religious, physical, spiritual and psychological are at the core of our practice.

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

Sacred Heart School Mission Statement:

Sacred Heart Secondary School is committed to excellence. We see the primary role of our school as providing an experience of living in a Christian community, which has, as its ideal the community of the gospel; one of love, care and trust.

3. Admission Statement

Sacred Heart Secondary School 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.

Please note that by virtue of the fact that Sacred Heart Secondary School is an all girls’ school and therefore does not discriminate where it refuses to admit a boy applying for admission to this school.

Sacred Heart Secondary School is a school whose objective is to provide education in an environment which promotes:

Catholic religious values and does not discriminate where it admits a students of the Catholic faith in preference to others.

Certain religious values and does not discriminate where it refuses to admit as a student who is not Catholic and it is proved that the refusal is essential to maintain the ethos of the school.

Admissions will be carried out according to the terms of this policy.

4. Categories of Special Education Needs catered for in the School

This is not applicable to the Sacred Heart Secondary School as we do not have an approved special class.

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), or
- 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/her and that he/she shall make all reasonable efforts to ensure compliance with such code by the student, or

- c) the person seeking admission is not of the gender provided for by this school as the Sacred Heart Secondary School provides education exclusively for girls.

The school is deeply conscious of its Mercy ethos and characteristic spirit. Students and parents are required to be fully aware and supportive of our Catholic ethos.

With the agreement of the school's trustees, CEIST, the Admissions Policy was ratified by the school's Board of Management in 7th September 2020 and replaces all other previous admissions policies. It is to be clearly understood that applications are received and offers of places in the school are made in strict accordance with the most recently ratified Admissions Policy and are not under the terms of any earlier Admissions Policy.

Admissions Procedures

Each year the Board of Management decides in advance the number of First Year students for whom the school can provide an appropriate education, having due regard for the relevant Department of Education & Skills provisions re: class size, staff provision and/or any other relevant requirements concerning accommodation, such as physical space or the health and welfare of students.

Sacred Heart Secondary School has traditionally operated a Waiting List (which we refer to as the Historic Waiting List) for children whose parents/guardians had applied for a place, often many years in advance.

Entry to the Historic Waiting List closed on 1st February 2020 and no further names will be added to it **under any circumstances**. The Historic Waiting List will cease to operate after the academic year 2025/26.

Additionally, the school also operates a second Waiting List, called the Current Year Waiting List. Where a place is not available for a particular child who otherwise meets the eligibility criteria listed below the Board of Management is refusing to admit the child due to oversubscription, the parents will be asked if they wish their child be placed on the Current Year Waiting List.

Students who are eligible for admission:

- a. have either applied to the school within the window for applications for the particular academic year as set out in the Annual Admission Notice or are already on the Historic Waiting List for the academic years up until 2025/2026.
- b. have reached the required age 12 on the 1st January in the calendar year following the child's entry into First Year.
- c. have normally completed Sixth class in Primary School.
- d. must be willing, in conjunction with their parents, to accept the ethos of the School.
- e. must be willing, with parents/guardians to accept the school Code of Behaviour. Confirmation in writing is required that parents/guardians and students accept the Code of Behaviour.
- f. must be willing to sit an Assessment Test on an assigned date following an offer and acceptance of a place in SHS. The assessment test is administered in January/February on the year prior to entry into the school. The test is used to assess attainment levels in order

to best cater for students according to their needs and to allocate students to structured mixed ability classes. **The outcome of this test has no bearing on a decision to admit a student, but students must sit the test to ensure that they can be placed in the appropriate classes.**

NB: Only students who are offered a place in the school take the Assessment Test.

6. Oversubscription

In the event that the school is oversubscribed, the school will, when deciding on applications for admission, prioritise **eligible** applicants from the Historic Waiting List and then other applicants.

Priority 1: Applicants who are on the Historic Waiting List (this priority will cease to be of effect on the 1st February 2025) will be ranked in order on the basis of the following categories:

- a. Siblings (sisters of students past and/or present of the Sacred Heart Secondary School)
- b. Students whose parents were past pupils. A past pupil is defined as any girl who completed at least three years in the Sacred Heart Secondary School. A maximum of 25% of the available spaces (as set out in the school's annual admission notice) are made available under this category. Applicants who do not get one of the assigned places will be considered for admission on the basis of the remaining categories below)
- c. A student whose parent/guardian has been a member of staff in the Sacred Heart Secondary School on the year of application for at least one full academic year prior to the application.
- d. All other applicants.

Priority 2: All other applicants will be ranked in order on the basis of the following categories:

- a. Siblings (sisters of students past and/or present of the Sacred Heart Secondary School)
- b. Students whose parents were past pupils. A past pupil is defined as any girl who completed at least three years in the Sacred Heart Secondary School. A maximum of 25% of the available spaces (as set out in the school's annual admission notice) are made available under this category. Applicants should note that generally most of the assigned places for daughters of past pupils will have been allotted to Priority 1 applications. Applicants who do not get one of the assigned places will be considered for admission on the basis of the remaining categories below.
- c. A student whose parent/guardian has been a member of staff in the Sacred Heart Secondary School on the year of application for at least one full academic year prior to the application.
- d. All other applicants.

Places will be offered to eligible applicants in the order that they are ranked on the basis of the above categories, with Priority 1 applications being assessed and ranked first and then Priority 2 applications. As there will be multiple applicants in each sub-category (e.g. Priority 1, paragraph a), applicants in each sub-category will be allocated based on date of receipt of enrolment form in Priority 1 and drawn by lottery (overseen by an independent person agreed by the BOM) in Priority 2 and will be placed on a list (the Application List) in the order they

are drawn. Places will then be offered to applicants based on their place on the Application list until there are no more places available. The remaining applicants will be informed that their application was not successful but that they will be placed on the Current Year Waiting List for that academic year in the order they appeared on the Application List.

Applicants should note that a total of 25% of places which are assigned to children of past pupils is available for both Priority 1 and Priority 2 applications but as the places are limited, there is likely to be more applicants than places available for such applicants, particularly in the case of Priority 2 applicants.

Application Procedure

- a. Parents should note that Applications will only be accepted in respect of the following academic year. Applications are only accepted from the date outlined in the Annual Admission Notice (Appendix A).
- b. Application forms will be available by downloading from the school website and/or by emailing, calling to or telephoning the school office. Application forms are also available on Open Night. For those who have not already applied and wish to apply, application forms are **only** available for the period as stated on the Annual Admissions Notice.
- c. Students are offered a place in 1st year during the dates as outlined in the Annual Admissions Notice of the year preceding the year of entry, the number of which will have been decided by the Board of Management. First round of offers will be posted to parents/guardians. **Parents/guardians must accept the offer by the date stated. Failure to do so will be taken as a refusal to accept the offer of a place.** This process will continue until all available places are offered and accepted.
- d. Once all places have been filled, the remaining applicants will be informed by letter and requested to complete a form to express their interest in being placed on the Current Year Waiting List.
- e. Parents/Guardians of incoming 1st year students will be invited to attend an Information Evening. Parents/guardians and their daughters are strongly encouraged to attend this meeting.
- f. On completion of the admission process a request will be made from the Sacred Heart Secondary School for all relevant information to be made available from the student's previous school, including a student's educational passport and special education requirements etc. This will assist the school in making appropriate education provision for each student.

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) the payment of fees or contributions (howsoever described) to the school;

- (b) a student's academic ability, skills or aptitude;
- (c) the occupation, financial status, academic ability, skills or aptitude of a student's parents;
- (d) a requirement that a student, or his or her parents, attend an interview, open day or other meeting as a condition of admission;
- (e) a student's connection to the school by virtue of a member of his or her family attending or having previously attended the school (maximum limit of 25% of the available spaces are made available under this category); other than sisters of a student attending or having attended the school and/or parents or grandparents of a student having attended the school in accordance with the criteria set out above.
- (f) the date and time on which an application for admission was received by the school, other than those on the historic waiting list in Priority 1 as stated in Section 7

8. Decisions on applications

All decisions on applications for admission to Sacred Heart Secondary School 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 Sacred Heart Secondary School, 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 Sacred Heart Secondary School 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/she shall make all reasonable efforts to ensure compliance with such code by the student; or
- (iv) an applicant has failed to comply with the requirements of ‘acceptance of an offer’ as set out in section 10 above.

The Board of Management has a duty of care to ensure as far as practicable the health and safety of the students and staff of the school. In addition, the Board of Management is required under section 15(1) of the Education Act 1998 to provide, or cause to be provided, an appropriate education for each student at the school for which that board has responsibility.

An application for admission may be refused, therefore, where the admission of the applicant would pose a significant risk to the health and safety of the applicant or students and staff of the school, or risk significantly interfering with the right of other students to an appropriate education.

12. Sharing of Data with other schools

Applicants should be aware that section 66(6) of the Education Act 1998 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 lists in the event of oversubscription

SHS operates two Waiting lists in the event of oversubscription. Applicants are entered on the waiting lists for either the intake class or a particular year.

1. Historic Waiting List

- 1.1. Sacred Heart Secondary School has traditionally operated a Waiting List (which we refer to as the Historic Waiting List) for children who had applied for a place in first year but for whom no place was available.
- 1.2. Entry to the Historic Waiting List closed on 1st February 2020 and no further names will be added to it under any circumstances. In accordance with Section 62(11)(b) of the Education Act 1998 as amended, this list will cease to operate on the 2nd February 2025.
- 1.3. Parents of children on the Historic Waiting List have been notified that their daughters remain on this list, and these parents have confirmed that they are still interested in a place.
- 1.4. As places become available each September or during the school year, applicants on the Historic Waiting List will be prioritised in accordance with Section 6 above and Section 15 below respectively.

2. Current Year Waiting List

- 2.1. Where a place is not available for a particular child who otherwise meets the qualifying criteria listed above and the Board of Management is refusing to admit the child due to oversubscription, the parents will be asked if they wish their child be placed on the Current Year Waiting List.
- 2.2. The Current Year Waiting List will operate for one school year. It will run until the end of the Academic Year for which the offers were made in that Applications Process. **On the last of day in May of each year, the Current Year Waiting list will cease to operate.**
- 2.3. If a child is entered on the Current Year Waiting List for a particular academic year, this will not give them any priority for entry in the academic year commencing the following September. A new application for the child will be required for the following academic year even if they are placed on the Current Year Waiting List and her application will be processed again in accordance with the school's Admissions Policy.
- 2.4. The child will be listed on the Current Year Waiting List only in respect of the class for which her application was considered and each child will be listed on the Current Year Waiting List in the order she was drawn in the lottery referred to in Section 6 above. If a place becomes available during the Academic Year in the relevant class, the place will be offered in accordance with Section 15 below.

2.5. If the child's parents/guardians wish to reapply for entry the following Academic year, they may do so. Their child will continue to be listed on the Current Year Waiting List in the interim until the end of the Academic Year.

14. Late Applications

All applications for admission received after the closing date as outlined in the annual admission notice will be considered and decided upon in accordance with our school's admissions policy, the Education Admissions to School Act 2018 and any regulations made under that Act.

Late applicants will be notified of the decision in respect of their application not later than three weeks after the date on which the school received the application. Late applicants will be offered a place if there is a place available. In the event that there is no place available, the name of the applicant will be added to the end of the Current Year Waiting List (selection criteria does not give priority to late applicants)

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

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:

- (a) the school is oversubscribed (please see section 6 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

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:

- (a) the school is oversubscribed (please see section 6 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

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.

In order to ensure that the educational interests of incoming students are met, the BoM may instruct the Principal/Deputy Principal to request a meeting with the parent and the student and their parent(guardian). The parent will be advised to bring documents such as school reports, birth certificate etc. to this meeting.

Admission to Sacred Heart Secondary School is not conditional on any of the above.

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

The board of Sacred Heart Secondary School or any persons acting on its behalf shall not, except in accordance with section 64 of the Education Act 1998, charge fees for or seek payment or contributions (howsoever described) as a condition of-

- (a) an application for admission of a student to the school, or
- (b) the admission or continued enrolment of a student in the school.

17. Arrangements regarding students not attending religious instruction

A parent of a student, or a student who has reached the age of 18, who wishes to attend Sacred Heart Secondary School without attending religious instruction should make a written request to the Principal. A meeting will then be arranged with the parent or the student, as the case may be, to discuss how that request may be accommodated by the school.

18. Reviews/appeals

Review of decisions by the Board of Management

The parent of the student, or in the case of a student who has reached the age of 18 years, the student, may request the board to review a decision to refuse admission. Such requests must be made in accordance with Section 29C of the Education Act 1998.

The timeline within which such a review must be requested and the other requirements applicable to such reviews are set out in the procedures determined by the Minister under section 29B of the Education Act 1998 which are published on the website of the Department of Education and Skills.

The board will conduct such reviews in accordance with the requirements of the procedures determined under Section 29B and with section 29C of the Education Act 1998.

Note: Where an applicant has been refused admission due to the school being oversubscribed, the applicant **must request a review** of that decision by the board of management prior to making an appeal under section 29 of the Education Act 1998.

Where an applicant has been refused admission due to a reason other than the school being oversubscribed, the applicant **may request a review** of that decision by the board of management prior to making an appeal under section 29 of the Education Act 1998.

Right of appeal

Under Section 29 of the Education Act 1998, the parent of the student, or in the case of a student who has reached the age of 18 years, the student, may appeal a decision of this school to refuse admission.

An appeal may be made under Section 29 (1)(c)(i) of the Education Act 1998 where the refusal to admit was due to the school being oversubscribed.

An appeal may be made under Section 29 (1)(c)(ii) of the Education Act 1998 where the refusal to admit was due a reason other than the school being oversubscribed.

Where an applicant has been refused admission due to the school being oversubscribed, the applicant **must request a review** of that decision by the board of management **prior to making an appeal** under section 29 of the Education Act 1998. (see Review of decisions by the Board of Management)

Where an applicant has been refused admission due to a reason other than the school being oversubscribed, the applicant **may request a review** of that decision by the board of management prior to making an appeal under section 29 of the Education Act 1998. (see Review of decisions by the Board of Management)

Appeals under Section 29 of the Education Act 1998 will be considered and determined by an independent appeals committee appointed by the Minister for Education and Skills.

The timeline within which such an appeal must be made and the other requirements applicable to such appeals are set out in the procedures determined by the Minister under section 29B of the Education Act 1998 which are published on the website of the Department of Education and Skills.

Amended policy adopted by the Board of Management on 30th June 2022



Appendices

Appendix A



Sacred Heart School

Sunnyside,

Drogheda

ANNUAL ADMISSION NOTICE FOR 2022/23

Please see website for the Annual Admissions Notice

Appendix B



Student Application Form

**Application form available on the website from October 2022
No application will be accepted before this date.**