



# *Mercy College, Woodford, Loughrea, Co. Galway.*

Tel: (090) 9749076

Mobile: 0862481694

Chy No:20147259

**Website:** [www.mercycollegewoodford.ie](http://www.mercycollegewoodford.ie)

**E-mail:** [admin@mercycollegewoodford.ie](mailto:admin@mercycollegewoodford.ie)

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## **Admission Policy of Mercy College Woodford**

**Roll number: 631711**

**School Patron/s: 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 and with parents of children attending the school.

The policy was approved by the school patron on 19<sup>th</sup> 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 Mercy College Woodford 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.

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 College Woodford is a co-educational Catholic voluntary secondary school with a Catholic ethos under the trusteeship of CEIST.

'Catholic Ethos' in the context of a Catholic voluntary secondary school means the ethos and characteristic spirit of the Roman Catholic Church, which aims at promoting:

- (a) the full and harmonious development of all aspects of the person of the pupil, 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,

and which school provides religious education 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.

In accordance with S.15 (2) (b) of the Education Act, 1998 the Board of Management of Mercy College Woodford 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.

The core values of CEIST are intended to support and nourish the lives of the people who are at the heart of our schools – students, staff and parents. These are the members of the school; their rights must be respected and their responsibilities should be performed in a manner which promotes the spiritual development of each person, achieves quality in teaching and learning, shows respect for every person, creates a sense of community, and is founded on compassion and justice.

The school is conducted day-to-day in the light of this ethos, an ethos that always informs the work of the school. As part of this ethos, religious and specifically Catholic iconography will be on display within the sch

### Mercy College Mission Statement

Mercy College Woodford is a Catholic, co-educational school open to all pupils in the community seeking second-level education. As a Mercy school we have a special commitment to the education of the poor and the disadvantaged.

The school is committed to fostering Christian values and mutual respect in a caring environment.

Our school provides for the academic, spiritual, social, personal, and physical development of the individual. The school with the co-operation of parents will endeavour to respond to the educational needs of the community within the limits of available resources.

### School Profile

Mercy College Woodford is a small co-educational secondary school located in the rural area of Woodford. Here a broad education is provided and Christian values are lived and taught. Since the pursuit of knowledge leading to a career is an important part of Education, tuition is provided in an extensive range of academic and technical subjects. The subjects and courses offered satisfy the entry requirements for all third-level Colleges and for all trades and professions (see School Prospectus). The school caters for and welcomes students who have additional learning needs.

The school is committed to providing a Catholic education in conformity to the teaching of the Roman Catholic Church and to fostering Christian values in a caring and nurturing environment.

## **3. Admission Statement**

Mercy College Woodford 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.

Mercy College Woodford 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 College Woodford will comply with any direction served on the board or the patron under section 37A and 67(4)(b).

### **Post-primary denominational schools**

Mercy College Woodford 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 Faith in preference to others.

### **All denominational schools**

Mercy College Woodford 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 of the Catholic Faith and it is proved that the refusal is essential to maintain the ethos of the school.

### **Schools with special education class(es)**

Mercy College Woodford is a school which has established a class, with the approval

of the Minister for Education and Skills, which provides an education exclusively for students with a category or categories of special educational needs specified by the minister and may refuse to admit to the class a student who does not have the category of needs specified.

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

Mercy College Woodford with the approval of the Minister for Education and Skills, has established a class to provide an education exclusively for students with ASD.

#### **5. Admission of Students**

This school shall admit each eligible 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

#### **All denominational schools**

Mercy College Woodford is a Catholic Faith school and may refuse to admit as a student a person who is not of the Roman Catholic Faith where it is proved that the refusal is essential to maintain the ethos of the school.

#### **School with special education class(es)**

The special class attached to Mercy College Woodford provides an education exclusively for students with ASD and the school may refuse admission to this class, where the student concerned does not have the specified category of special educational needs provided for in this class.

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

### **Selection criteria:**

1. All children from Primary Schools within the catchment area – Woodford NS, Derryoover NS, Moyglass NS, Ballinakill NS, Drim NS
2. Brothers and sisters of current students
3. Children of all staff members
4. Children of past pupils
5. Children of the Catholic Faith

If 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:

1. Lottery when all more rational methods have failed. This will be carried out by the Chairperson of the Board and the Principal in the presence of the parents/guardians concerned.

## **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:

- (i) a student's prior attendance at a pre-school or pre-school service, including naíonraí
- (ii) the payment of fees or contributions (howsoever described) to the school;
- (iii) a student's academic ability, skills or aptitude;

other than in relation to:

- admission to the ASD special class insofar as it is necessary in order to ascertain whether or not the student has the category of special educational needs concerned;
- (iv) the occupation, financial status, academic ability, skills or aptitude of a student's parents;
- (v) a requirement that a student, or his or her parents, attend an interview, open day or other meeting as a condition of admission;
- (vi) 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 siblings or parents of a student having attended the school;
- (vii) 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.

## **8. Decisions on applications**

All decisions on applications for admission to Mercy College Woodford 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 College Woodford, 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 are 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 College Woodford 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 certain information 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 accepted by the applicant;
- (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 year concerned than places available, a waiting list of students whose applications for admission to Mercy College Woodford 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 of Mercy College Woodford 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.

Offers of any subsequent places that become available for and during the school year in relation to 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 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 waiting list.

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

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.

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:

### **Entry to the Special Education Class**

All applications must be accompanied by an Assessment carried out by an Educational/Clinical Psychologist, approved by the Department of Education & Skills, recommending the candidate as suitable for consideration for entry to an Autism Spectrum Classroom.

Following receipt of a completed application, supported with all required documentation, applications will be considered in conjunction with the Special Educational Needs Organiser (SENO) for the area.

The following documentation is required:

1. A completed Application Form to enrol which is available online or from the school.
2. An Educational/Clinical Psychologist's Report recommending the candidate is suitable for placement in an Autism Spectrum Classroom. The Classroom in Mercy College Woodford will cater for children presenting on the Autism Spectrum who are high functioning or have mild general learning difficulties or moderate learning difficulties. It will not cater for children with severe or profound learning difficulties.
3. Reports from all previous schools. Signed consent from parents/guardians granting the school permission to access any relevant reports from previous schools attended in order to ascertain eligibility for enrolment to the Special Education Class.

Parents/guardians will agree to share the content of any further reports with the school, e.g. Psychological, Occupational Therapy or Speech and Language reports.

The closing date will be as for all pupils.

The following criteria will apply in the allocation of places in the Special Education Class:

- That there is available space. The Class will provide for a maximum of 6 students.
- That the needs of the student as identified can be met within the Special

Education Class.

- Where there are more applicants than places students from the national schools of the school's catchment area will have priority.
- The recommendation of the SENO for the area based on the needs of the applicants.
- All recommendations will then be considered by the Board of Management of the school who make the final decision on all applicants.

Mercy College may, in certain circumstances and following assessment, be unable to meet the needs of the applicant on the grounds that:

- They are deemed a risk to themselves or others.
- Admission of the candidate would make impossible, or have a serious detrimental effect on, the provision by an educational establishment of its services to others.

The placement of each child will be subject to regular, at least annual, review by school staff and, where relevant, professionals external to the school. At this point a decision will be made as to whether the pupil will:

- Continue in the Special Education Class
- Integrate fully into mainstream school
- Seek an alternative placement

The closing date for applications to transfer into the Special Education Classroom will be as for all applications for the following school year.

The Board of Management reserves the right to refuse an application for enrolment. Parents/Guardians of pupils who are refused admission will be advised of their right to appeal and given information on how to do so.

### **Transfer Students**

An application to transfer is defined as one where a student is previously enrolled in another secondary school in or outside the catchment area and wishes to transfer to our school or a student who makes an application to transfer into our school after the commencement of the autumn school term.

### **Application Procedure**

Students transferring from other second level schools will be dealt with on a case by case basis and respecting all legislative and Department of Education & Skills

circulars. Applications will only be considered subject to the following procedure:

1. Completion of an application form – available upon written request from the school office.
2. Consideration of a completed application form – incomplete forms will be returned to the parent/guardian.
3. The school is satisfied for the reasons for transfer.
4. Mercy College Woodford may request the following
  - Record of school attendance at previous school(s)
  - Behavioural Report from previous school(s)
  - List of subjects studied in previous school(s)
  - List of subjects to be studied in Mercy College Woodford (providing spaces are available in chosen subjects)
  - Acceptance of the school ethos and characteristic spirit as outlined in this Admission policy
  - Acceptance of the School Code of Behaviour
  - Consultation with the Education Welfare Officer
  - Any relevant Psychological Report, forwarded with permission
  - Copies of any relevant psychological, medical assessment relating to the student and their educational needs
  - Copies of the last three school-based assessment including any state exam (for access to the Special Education Class only)
  - Birth/Adoption Certificate.

### **Transfers into exam years**

Students seeking to transfer will not be considered for enrolment into year groups due for State Examination the following June (3<sup>rd</sup>& 6<sup>th</sup> year and LCA2). This is in order to ensure we can adequately meet students' needs, ensure all elements of the required curriculum are covered, and to know the student individually should difficulties arise, particularly around examination time. However, in such cases transfer students may, if deemed appropriate, be afforded the opportunity to apply for admission into 1<sup>st</sup>/2<sup>nd</sup>/TY/5<sup>th</sup> year, subject to the criteria outlined in this policy.

### **Timeframe**

In general, it is the policy of Mercy College Woodford BOM not to accept transfers during the school year.

Transfers into any student year group will not ordinarily be considered after 30<sup>th</sup> September in any school year. Exception to this Board of Management requirement

is maintained for those students from families who meet all the following three criteria:

1. Have recently moved into the area
2. Have evidential proof of new residence.
3. Have no existing school place and have not been asked to leave or been expelled from their previous post primary school.

In order to consider an application from a student who has been expelled or asked to leave their previous post-primary school, it is required by the parent of that student to provide written evidence of the completion of the Section 29 process against the said school, as outlined in the Education Acts.

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

The board of Mercy College Woodford or any persons acting on its behalf will not 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 College Woodford without attending religious instruction should make a written request to the Principal. A meeting will then be arranged with the parent or the student to discuss how the 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 to 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.

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*The policy was approved by CEIST on 12 January 2023. It is published on the school's website and will be made available in hardcopy, on request, to any person who requests it.*