**Admission Policy of Catherine McAuley Special School**

**School Address: Ashbourne Avenue, Limerick**

**Roll number: 18692 I**

**School Patron/s: The Bishop of Limerick**

## **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 parent / guardians of children attending the school.

The policy was approved by the school patron on 15th September 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 Catherine McAuley Special School 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.

## **Characteristic spirit and general objectives of the school**

Catherine McAuley Special School is a Catholic designated special school with a Catholic ethos under the patronage of the Bishop of Limerick

“Catholic Ethos” in the context of a Catholic primary 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, a living relationship with God and with other people; and

(b) including the intellectual, physical, cultural, moral and spiritual aspects; 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 for which the school provides religious education for the pupils 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 Catherine McAuley 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.

Catherine McAuley School is a designated special school committed to the holistic education of the pupil whose primary disability is a Mild or Borderline Mild General Disability (i.e. a full scale I.Q. between 50 to 69 or 70 to 79). Appendix II of Circular 8/99 and Appendix II of Circular Sp.Ed. 08/02 lay out such criteria as determined by an educational or clinical psychologist. The school operates under the Rules for Primary Schools laid down by the Department of Education and Skills. The pupil / teacher ratio presently for such pupils is 1 to 11. The school caters for students of primary and post primary ages. It is a co-educational school which presently has an enrolment of 240 pupils.

The school follows the curricular programmes prescribed by the Department of Education and Science, which may be amended from time to time, in accordance with Sections 9 and 30 of the Education Act (1998). The Curriculum for Pupils with Mild General Learning Disabilities is the bedrock of all that is taught, along with the Primary School’s Curriculum. The school also provides recognised post-primary programmes including the Junior Certificate School Programme, The Junior Cycle L2LP & L3LP,The Leaving Certificate Applied and QQI Levels I to IV.

The school is financed directly by way of capitation and other grants provided by the Department of Education and Skills. School policy has regard to the resources and funding available. The teaching and SNA staffing is determined by the DES through the NCSE. As special schools are under the primary section of the Department, the lengths of the school day and the school year are equivalent to primary school regulations.

Within the context and parameters of Department regulations and programmes, the rights of the patron as set out in the Education Act (1998), and the funding and resources available, the school supports the principles of:

* Inclusive access to an appropriate curriculum for all pupils;
* Equality of access and participation in all areas of the school life;
* Parent guardian choice in relation to enrolment, provided that the pupil’s primary disability is a Mild or Borderline Mild General Learning Disability; and
* Respect for diversity of values, beliefs, traditions, languages and ways of life in society.

## **Admission Statement**

Catherine McAuley Special School will not discriminate in its admission of a student to the school on any of the following:

1. the gender ground of the student or the applicant in respect of the student concerned,
2. the civil status ground of the student or the applicant in respect of the student concerned,
3. the family status ground of the student or the applicant in respect of the student concerned,
4. the sexual orientation ground of the student or the applicant in respect of the student concerned,
5. the religion ground of the student or the applicant in respect of the student concerned,
6. the disability ground of the student or the applicant in respect of the student concerned,
7. the ground of race of the student or the applicant in respect of the student concerned,
8. the Traveller community ground of the student or the applicant in respect of the student concerned, or
9. 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.

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| **Special schools**Catherine McAuley Special School is a school which, with the approval of the Minister for Education and Skills, provides an education exclusively for students with a category or categories of special educational needs specified by the Minister and does not discriminate in relation to the admission of a student who does not have the category of needs specified. |

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

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| Catherine McAuley Special School with the approval of the Minister for Education and Skills, provides an education exclusively for students with Mild and Borderline Mild General Learning Disability, assessed by an educational or clinical psychologist within the I.Q, range of 50 to 79. |

## **Admission of Students**

This school shall admit each student seeking admission except where –

1. the school is oversubscribed (please see [section 6](#_Oversubscription_(this_section) below for further details)
2. a parent / guardian 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

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| Catherine McAuley Special School provides an education exclusively for students with Mild and Borderline Mild General Learning Disability and will refuse admission to a student, where the student does not have the specified category of special educational needs provided for by this school.Catherine McAuley School does not provide an educational service to pupils whose primary disability is in one or more of the following areas:1. Physical or Sensory
2. Emotional or Behavioural
3. Autistic Spectrum Disorder
4. Attention Deficit Disorder, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, Oppositional Defiance Disorder
5. Any other recognised disorder that can co-occur with a Mild or Borderline Mild General Disability.

However the school will consider applications for places for pupils with such disabilities provided that such are secondary to a primary disability of Mild or Borderline Mild General Learning Disability. To this end the Board of Management alone reserves the right to establish or to disband specialised units in consultation with the Department and Skills, under the National Council for Special Education for pupils with such secondary disabilities, again provided that such disabilities are secondary to a primary disability of Mild or Borderline Mild General Disability.As it is designated as a school for pupils with MGLD and Borderline MGLD, the school cannot enrol students, whose primary disability does not fall within the parameters of this disability, including pupils with a borderline Moderate disability or assessed as having Low Average ability. If ambiguity exists as to the exact nature of a prospective pupil’s disability, based on unclear reports supplied when enrolment is sought, the school reserves the right to determine whether a pupil qualifies for Catherine McAuley School. Applications for enrolment are made in writing in the period set out in the Admissions Notice. A copy of the enrolment policy will be made available to applicants who cannot access it on the school’s website. On receipt of a letter seeking enrolment, applicants will be asked to furnish the following:1. A completed application form
2. An Educational Psychological Assessment which determines the nature of the prospective pupil’s disability, which has been completed within two years of the proposed date of entry to the school.
3. Any additional reports and assessments from the pupil’s present school or from other professionals which provide help in determining appropriate provision for the pupil.
4. Permission may be sought to consult with the pupil’s previous school and / or any other professional in relation to the pupil.
5. Permission to seek an independent psychological assessment if required, where a doubt or ambiguity exists as to the disability of a pupil.
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## **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:

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:

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| * Availability of places at the age of the applicant,
* Availability of suitable additional supports and staffing to cater for additional needs that a pupil may have,
* Applicants within the catchment area of Catherine McAuley School includes all of County Limerick, parts of Counties Clare, Tipperary and Cork. This area is defined by the transport policy of the Department of Education, where the DES provides transport to the most appropriate school nearest to the residential address of the student when the application is made.
* Children of staff members
* Applicants outside of this area if 1. a vacancy exists 2. parents have independent means of transport and 3. there is no suitable alternative nearest to the residential address.
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## **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:

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| 1. a student’s prior attendance at a pre-school or pre-school service, including naíonraí,
2. the payment of fees or contributions (howsoever described) to the school;
3. a student’s academic ability, skills or aptitude; other than in relation to admission to Catherine McAuley Special School insofar as it is necessary in order to ascertain whether or not the student has the category of special educational needs concerned;
4. the occupation, financial status, academic ability, skills or aptitude of a student’s parent / guardians;
5. a requirement that a student, or his or her parent / guardians, attend an interview, open day or other meeting as a condition of admission; However, given the nature of our school, applicants will be asked to engage with the school to help a smooth transfer for the pupil.
6. a student’s connection to the school by virtue of a member of his or her family attending or having previously attended the school; however the school will give due consideration to an application for a pupil with a sibling already in the school
7. the date and time on which an application for admission was received by the school if there are sufficient places at the age of the pupil.

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. |

## **Decisions on applications**

All decisions on applications for admission to Catherine McAuley Special 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](#_Late_Applications) below in relation to applications received outside of the admissions period and [section 15](#_Procedures_for_admission)  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.

## **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](#_Reviews/appeals) below for further details).

## **Acceptance of an offer of a place by an applicant**

In accepting an offer of admission from Catherine McAuley Special School, an applicant must indicate –

(i) whether or not he/she has accepted an offer of admission for another school or schools. If the applicant has accepted such an offer, he/she must also provide details of the offer or offers concerned and

(ii) whether or not the applicant has applied for and awaiting confirmation of an offer of admission from another school or schools, and if so, he/she must provide details of the other school or schools concerned.

## **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 Catherine McAuley School where—

1. it is established that information contained in the application is false or misleading.
2. 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.
3. the parent / guardian 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
4. an applicant has failed to comply with the requirements of ‘acceptance of an offer’ as set out in [section 10](#_Acceptance_of_an) above.

## **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 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).

## **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 Catherine McAuley Special School 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 Catherine McAuley Special School is in the order of priority assigned to the students’ applications school if there are sufficient places at the age of the pupil 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.

## **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 no later than three weeks after the date on which the school received the application. Late applicants will be offered a place if there is place available. In the event that there is no place available, the name of the applicant will be added to the waiting list as set out in Section 13.

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

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| 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: 1. Applications for a place in Catherine McAuley Special School can be made to any section of the school, either in the primary or secondary section.
2. The maximum number of students per class is 11 for an MGLD class and 6 for an ASD class.
3. Presently the school has 19 MGLD classes and 4 ASD classes and a total student intake of 240
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| 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:1. Catherine McAuley Special School will admit new students in the course of the school year who may be on the school waiting list if a vacancy becomes available and the school considers it to be in the best interests of the pupil.
2. Catherine McAuley Special School will consider ‘crisis’ applications where the pupil’s placement in his/her mainstream has broken down for educational/well- being issues or where a pupil already in a similar special school moves within our catchment area and where it does not discriminate against a pupil on a waiting list.
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## **Declaration in relation to the non-charging of fees**

The board of Catherine McAuley Special School or any persons acting on its behalf will not charge fees for or seek payment or contributions (howsoever described) as a condition of-

1. an application for admission of a student to the school, or
2. the admission or continued enrolment of a student in the school.

##  **Arrangements regarding students not attending religious instruction**

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| The following are the school’s arrangements for students, where the parent / guardian~~s~~ or in the case of a student who has reached the age of 18 years, the student, who has requested that the student attend the school without attending religious instruction in the school. These arrangements will not result in a reduction in the school day of such students:* + - 1. The class teacher will provide additional work for any student not engaging in religious instruction, separate from the main class but within the classroom.
			2. This will also include school assemblies with a religious content.
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## **Reviews/appeals**

**Review of decisions by the board of Management**

The parents/guardians of 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 parents/guardians of 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.

**Policy on Enrolment in an ASD Class in Catherine McAuley School**

**Catherine McAuley Special School, while a designated school for pupils with Mild and Borderline Mild General Learning Disability, has many pupils with a co-occurrent disability. This policy reflects this phenomenon and should be seen as part of the overall Enrolment policy.**

**With the rise in incidence and assessment of pupils with Autistic Spectrum Disorders, Catherine McAuley School has embraced and adapted to the number of pupils with Mild/Borderline Mild General Learning Disability who also have a diagnosis of ASD. Recent research suggests that almost half of the pupils diagnosed with ASD have learning difficulties in the Mild range, while one third of pupils diagnosed with MGLD have also a diagnosis of Autism. Recent trends also indicate a greater increase in students with ASD in our school.**

**With this in mind, Catherine McAuley School has established specialist ASD classes for students over the last decade. Presently there are four such classes, while there are also a significant number of students in our MGLD classes with ASD. The enrolment policy governs admittance to the school but the following are the guiding principles for enrolment in an ASD class:**

1. **Pupils must have a diagnosis of ASD and a copy of the DSM IV or ICD 10 report must be supplied to the school on application for a place. Pupils will not be accepted who have not got a diagnosis of Mild/Borderline Mild Learning Disability.**
2. **In consultation with parents, the school enrolment committee will decide if a pupil should require the additional support of an ASD class or whether an MGLD class may be more suitable.**
3. **A maximum of 6 pupils will be enrolled in an ASD class.**
4. **The Board of Management reserves the right to disband ASD classes, in the best interests of the school.**
5. **Where possible, pupils will progress in time from ASD classes to MGLD classes.**
6. **The Board of Management reserves the right of entry into ASD classes if a pupil presents with greater needs than the school normally encounters for MGLD, even though a pupil may have diagnoses of MGLD and ASD.**
7. **There may be incidences where the age range within an ASD class exceeds the normal class age range.**
8. **By accepting a place in an ASD class, parents/guardians acknowledge that alternative methodologies are employed in the teaching of the pupils.**
9. **If a place is not available for an applicant in an ASD class, a place may be offered in an MGLD class, provided that the enrolment committee feel that the pupil’s needs can be met in that class.**
10. **A separate letter of confirmation of acceptance of a place will be provided by parents before admittance to an ASD class.**