



**Mountrath
Community School**
Pobalscoil Mhaighean Rátha

Admissions Policy
of
Mountrath
Community School

Dysertbeigh, Mountrath, Co Laois

Roll number: 91550B

School Patron: Le Chéile

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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. 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 Mountrath Community 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

Mission Statement

Mountrath Community School will endeavour to provide an educational setting and experience within which each person is encouraged to grow academically, spiritually, emotionally, socially and culturally.

Mountrath Community School cherishes each member equally recognising his/her uniqueness, religious affiliation and cultural difference. Each member of the school community is entitled to be treated with respect and dignity. All members of the school community are encouraged to share in the responsibility of running the school.

Education lies at the centre of our purpose. Mountrath Community School will facilitate a positive learning and teaching environment. A learning environment should embrace the academic and cultural, leading to the development of the person as a whole. Students are expected to give due recognition and importance to their studies whilst striving towards educational excellence relative to their ability. Curricular and extra-curricular activities help form a mature and well-rounded student.

School Ethos

Statement on Characteristic Spirit

Mountrath School Community School is a co-educational, multi-denominational, post-primary school under the joint patronage of The Patrician Brothers (Le Chéile Trust) and Laois and Offaly Education and Training Board (LOETB).

Community Schools provide a comprehensive system of post-primary education open to all the children of the local community. An innovative approach to delivery of a wide-ranging curriculum contributes to the spiritual, moral, mental, physical and social well-being of students within their community. Community Schools may also provide for life-long learning within their local community through the provision of adult education programmes.

Our school was established under the Deed of Trust and opened on 1 September 2009 arising from an amalgamation of The Brigidine Secondary School (Mountrath), The Patrician College (Ballyfin), and St. Aengus Vocational School (Mountrath). The values of LOETB as a multi-denominational State Body and the inherited traditions, Christian values and founding intentions of The Brigidines and The Patrician Brothers are enshrined

in the characteristic spirit, in the life of our school and are respected, and cherished. The core values of Mountrath Community School are care, respect, community, inclusion, equality, justice and fairness. These values combine to provide and support an atmosphere that is conducive to excellence in teaching and learning. We endeavour to assist each student to reach their full potential in a calm, caring and creative environment.

Our values are reflected in how we live as a school community. The unique and intrinsic value of each member of the school community is recognised and respected. All are treated equally, regardless of race, gender, religion/belief, age, family status, marital status, and civil status, membership of the Traveller community, sexual orientation, ability, disability or socio-economic status. All students are given equal opportunity for enrolment, in line with the Education (Admissions to School) Act (2018) constructed in accordance with section 3 of the Equal Status Act 2000. Once enrolled, our school provides all our students with equal opportunities to engage with the curriculum, school life and the local community.

Mountrath Community School provides a safe physical and social environment that reinforces a sense of belonging to the school community and wider society. We strive to enable every student to realise their full potential regardless of any aspect of their identity, culture or background. Our school promotes a fully inclusive education that recognises the plurality of identities, beliefs and values held by students, parents and staff. We prepare open-minded and responsible citizens with a strong sense of shared values with a view to contributing to a just and fairer society.

Our school is multi-denominational where we welcome, respect and support students of all religions and beliefs. The provision of religious education, religious worship and the work of the Chaplain all combine to reflect the founding intention of the school, the school's mission statement and the needs of the students within the school. The characteristic spirit of the school finds practical expression through the provision of pastoral, liturgical and social outreach activities, as appropriate, for each student.

In Mountrath Community School, we celebrate the partnership, collaboration and empathy which nurtures and develops our young people in a community where the essence of our ethos is care and respect for self, others and our environment.

Resources:

Mountrath Community School is funded by the Department of Education & Skills and is staffed in accordance with the standard student-teacher ratios sanctioned by the Department in respect of curricular concessions, special needs, special programmes etc. The school operates within the regulations laid down by the Department from time to time.

The school follows the curricular programmes prescribed by the Department of Education and Skills which may be amended from time to time, in accordance with Section 9 and 30 of the Education Act 1998.

Presently the school provides the following programmes: Junior Certificate, an optional Transition Year (TY), the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP), the Leaving Certificate Applied Programme (LCA) and the established Leaving Certificate. In addition, there is an Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) class in place and a Hard of Hearing class.

The capacity of the school to implement its desired curriculum, its broad range of educational programmes, its breadth of extra-curricular activities, its school plan and policies are dependent on the resources it receives. Consequently, in determining its enrolment, activities and programmes for any school year, the school must have due regard to the teaching, management and administrative resources as well as the

accommodation, equipment and funding available to it. This is established by the overall size of the school sanctioned by the Department of Education and Skills and the Enrolment/Admission Policy of the Board of Management.

1. Admission Statement

Mountrath Community 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.

Mountrath Community School will cooperate with the National Council for Special Education in the performance by the Council of its function under the Education for Persons with Special education Needs Act 2004 relating to the provision of education to children with special education needs, in particular by the provision and operation of a special class or classes when requested to do so by the council.

Mountrath Community School will comply with any direction served on the patron or the Board, as the case may be, under section 37A and any direction served on the Board under section 67(4B) of the Education Act.

Special Educational Needs catered for in the school/special class

Mountrath Community School with the approval of the Minister for Education and Skills has established a class which provides an education exclusively for students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and a class which provided an education exclusively for students with a Hearing Impairment as a category of special education needs specified by the Minister.

Mountrath Community School, within the overall criteria for enrolment in the school and in line with the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act (2004), welcomes students with talents and/or special educational needs. The school will strive to provide an education for students with such needs in an inclusive environment, having regard to the facilities and services available in the school. The school will, as far as is practicable, ensure these students can participate in school life.

Mountrath Community School special education classes (le Chéile (ASD) and Solas (Hard of Hearing) – the special units attached to Mountrath Community School provide an education exclusively for students with Autistic Spectrum Disorder and hearing Impairment where there is a recommendation of a placement within our school setting by a relevant professional. The school may refuse admission to this class, where the

students concerned do not have the specified category of special needs provided for in this class or where the school feels that they do not have the resources or skill set to manage the difficulties presenting with the applicant, within that particular special education setting.

Note: Subject to the Admissions Policy herein students are admitted to the special education classes subject to a specific recommendation by a State recognised professional for a placement in an ASD class and a multidisciplinary meeting of internal and external stakeholders to assess the suitability of the placement and the phasing in of the placement if necessary. Full disclosure of reports and supports required.

Admission of Students

This school shall admit each student seeking admission except where –

- a) the school is oversubscribed please see section 3 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) The student seeking admission to a Special Class in the school does not have the category of special educational needs specified by the Minister of Education and Skills in respect of that class.
- d) Where the admission of an applicant would pose a significant risk to the health and safety of the applicant or the students and staff of the school, or pose a significant risk to the right of other students to an appropriate education then such an application for admission may be refused by the Board of Management.

There is an obligation on Parents/Guardians to provide all relevant accurate documentation. Any information found to be false or misleading while engaging in the application process may lead to refusal of placement.

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

ASD Class - Le Chéile

Mountrath Community School with the approval of the Minister for Education and Skills, has established a class, with an overall maximum enrolment of 6 students to provide an education exclusively for students with a diagnosis of Autism i.e. DSMIV, DSM-V or ICD-10. A student applying for a year-group but seeking admission to the Special Class should see Appendix 1 of this Admission Policy. If the student is also applying for a place in the mainstream Year Group in the event of an unsuccessful application to the Special Class, section 3 is also applicable in the case of the First-Year Group. For clarity, it is possible to seek admission to both the Special Class and the relevant mainstream Year group and be offered a place in both the Special Class and the mainstream Year Group or the mainstream Year group only. It is not possible to be offered a place in the Special Class only and not in the relevant Year Group.

Hard of Hearing Class - Solas

The deaf/hard of hearing (DHH) class in Mountrath Community School has a maximum of 7 places and will cater for students from 1st year to 6th Year, inclusive. To gain admission to the DHH class, the student's diagnosed hearing loss must be their predominant barrier to accessing the school's curriculum. The diagnosed hearing loss (mild, moderate, severe or profound or a progressive hearing loss), must be assessed by a qualified Audiologist or Audiological Scientist, as set out by the HSE Audiological Review 2011.

The date for enrolment for First Year will be decided by the Board of Management and will be published under the Admissions Notice on the school website each year. Primary schools within the catchment area will also be informed by letter.

The return of a completed Application Form 2 by the relevant cut-off date must be accompanied by all relevant educational and clinical reports pertaining to the student applicant.

The completion of an Assessment Test is required and is for class placement purposes only, and a fee is applicable for this test. (The completion is for class placement only)

Parents/guardians and students must also fully accept the Code of Behaviour and all other school policies. A signed copy of the abbreviated Code of Behaviour must be returned with the application form.

Acceptance of Code of Behaviour

The submission of an application form indicates the acceptance of the Ethos of the school, Code of Behaviour and other Mountrath Community School policies. Admission to the school implies full acceptance of the school Code of Behaviour and Discipline Policy and / or all other school policies. Students are expected to comply with all reasonable requests from staff members and school management. Parents/Guardians with their child must sign the school code and accept the operation of the school code.

The Principal reserves the right to exercise their discretion in application of the criteria and will at all times adhere to the guiding ethos of the school's education philosophy.

Catchment Area of Mountrath Community School

The following school are those in the catchment area of Mountrath Community School

Ballyfin N.S.	Pike-of-Rushall N.S
Borris-in-Ossory N.S.	Raheen N.S
Camross N.S	Scoil Bhríde
Castletown N.S	Shanahoe N.S.
Clonenagh N.S	St Fintans
Killanure NS	Trumera N.S
Paddock N.S	

The Board of Management sets a figure each year for the number of students to be accepted into First Year. This figure will depend on the overall number of students in the school and the overall capacity for which the school can cater. This number will be found on the Annual Schools Admission Notice on the school's website

- a) Applicants who satisfy the following criteria may apply for places in first year in the school:
- b) Students who wish to apply must have reached 12 years of age by the 1st of April of the year of entry or the year preceding entry to Mountrath Community School (a Birth Certificate must be presented).
- c) All applicants must have completed a full primary education up to 6th Class and applications will only be accepted from students who expect to complete a full primary school education. Applications for enrolment will only be accepted on behalf of students in 6th Class in primary school.
- d) Acceptance of the Code of Behaviour and all other Mountrath Community School Policies.
- e) Students must complete an Assessment Test for the sole purpose of class placement. A fee is payable to cover the cost of administering this Assessment Test.
- f) Application Forms for First Year are accepted up to the designated date as set out in the Admissions Notice decided by the Board of Management in the academic year prior to starting in First Year. The

school cannot accept applications before 1st of October in the year preceding the school year for which application to the intake year is being made.

- g) Late applications will be subject to the standard enrolment criteria and will be placed on a waiting list. Date and time of receipt of application to the school may be critical in awarding or granting a place.
- h) It is the responsibility of parents/guardians to ascertain the relevant closing date for applications. The closing date will be published on the school website. The completed Application Form must be returned by this closing date.
- i) As soon as it is practicable, and not more than 21 days after receipt of an application and after the closing date, the Board of Management will make its decision in respect of all applications and inform parents in writing at the address specified on the application form.
- j) An "Open Night" for prospective students and parents/guardians is held each October. Parents/guardians are encouraged to avail of this opportunity to view the school and speak to school personnel.
- k) In the event of a refusal to enrol, parents will be advised of their right to appeal the Board of Management decision firstly to the Board of Management and then under Section 29(1) of the Education Act 1998.

Criteria for priority of applications for First Year

Places in First Year will be allocated in the order listed below:

- a) Siblings of those attending Mountrath Community School and children of Mountrath Community School staff members and Board of Management.
- b) Children attending the following feeder schools who live within the defined catchment area:

Ballyfin N.S.	Pike-of-Rushall N.S
Borris-in-Ossory N.S.	Raheen N.S
Camross N.S	Scoil Bhríde
Castletown N.S	Shanahoe N.S.
Clonenagh N.S	St Fintans
Killanure NS	Trumera N.S
Paddock N.S	

(The catchment area is defined by the home address of the child – each child, who lives more than 4.8 kilometers away from a school is entitled to transport to their nearest school. If Mountrath Community School is your nearest school, then you are in the catchment area).

- c) Children from the above listed feeder schools who live outside the defined catchment area
- d) Children who live within the catchment area but do not attend any of the catchment area schools
- e) Children whose parents'/guardians are past pupils of the Brigidine Convent, Ballyfin College or St Aengus Vocational school
- f) All other applications

Proof of living in the Catchment area

Parent(s)/guardian(s) of applicants may be required to produce two original recent documents as outlined below. This documentation cannot be more than three months old.

Acceptable documents for verification of permanent residency in the catchment area:

- Utility Bill- electricity, home phone, gas.
- Correspondence from an insurance company
- Original statement (not an e-statement) from a Bank/Building Society/Credit Union
- Letter from department of Social Protection/Revenue

Procedures for Admission of Students to other Years and During the School Year

Applications to transfer from other schools

The Board of Management will consider applications from students wishing to transfer to Mountrath Community School. It will consider requests from students who wish to transfer at the **start** of the school year or **during** the school year. All applications will require a completed Application Form. Intending applicants must provide **all** relevant report(s) from their previous school(s). An Application Form will be incomplete and therefore invalid unless all relevant reports (Educational and Clinical) have been submitted. **It is the responsibility of the parents/guardian/social worker to comply with this requirement.** The Board of Management reserves the right to refuse enrolment if an incomplete application is submitted.

A formal interview with the Principal and/or Deputy Principal may form part of the application process for students wishing to transfer from other schools. Other school personnel from the SEN Department or Guidance and Counselling Department may be present at these interviews.

Student transfers are subject to the following:

- a) Space being available in the year group.
- b) Space being available in the appropriate subject options i.e. those that have been previously studied, where relevant.
- c) Space being available in the core subjects and at the desired level.

Mountrath Community School will consider applications for places in the school subject to their conformity with the criteria as per the enrolment of First Year students and to the availability of school places at the time of application. Where a student is considered for a place the decision is taken by the Board of Management following consultation with the Principal, Education Welfare Officer (where applicable), student, and parent/guardian.

Parents/guardians please note that:

- a) Incorrect and inaccurate information will render an application incomplete and may result in the return of the application form and a delay in processing the application. The Board of Management reserves the right to refuse enrolment if an application is incomplete.
- b) Proof of residence etc. is required with each application by the Board of Management.
- c) All of the agreements in place throughout this Application process apply

Appeals process

- a) In the first instance an appeal to refuse to enrol may be made to the Board of Management (the date of the next Board of Management meeting will be included in the letter of refusal). Parents/Guardians will also be informed that they may proceed directly to Section 29 under the Education Act 1998.
- b) A parent/guardian may appeal a refusal to enrol under Section 29 of the Education Act 1998. Application forms are available from the Department of Education and Skills or the Educational Welfare Officer.
- c) In relation to students with Special Educational Needs, refusal may be necessary in exceptional cases if the school deems itself unable to meet the applicant's educational, physical, or behavioural needs.

The Board of Management of Mountrath Community School reserves the right to adapt and update the Admissions Policy in acknowledgement of changing conditions.

Factors that will not influence Admission Status

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 preschool or pre-school service, other than in relation to a student's prior attendance at— (i) an early intervention class, or
(ii) An early start preschool, specified in a list published by the Minister from time to time;
- b) the payment of fees or contributions (howsoever described) to the school;
- c) a student's academic ability, skills or aptitude; other than in relation to admission to a special class insofar as it is necessary in order to ascertain whether or not the student has the category of special educational needs concerned
- 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, in the case of the school wishing to include a selection criterion based on (1) siblings of a student attending the school and/or (2) parents of a student having attended one of the three amalgamated schools.
- 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 Admissions Notice of the school for the school year concerned.

Refusing/Revoking an offer of Admission

An offer of Admission may be withdrawn where:

- a) The information contained in the application is false or misleading in a material respect, or
- b) The 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 for the academic year for which s/he is applying, or in the case of a late application, or second/third-round offer, within 2 weeks.

If an offer of a place is withdrawn by the school, the student on whose behalf the application was made shall lose their place on the admission list or waiting list for that academic year and any subsequent applications for the same academic year on behalf of that student shall be treated as a late application.

2. 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 more applicants than places, a lottery will determine the order in which the remaining places will be allocated. The lottery will also determine the order in which the remaining unsuccessful applicants will be placed on a waiting list.

Applicants on this list will have priority over any late applicants.

Lottery

If the number of applications is oversubscribed, then the Principal will arrange a special meeting to randomly select students to decide the order in which places in that category will be offered.

The following persons may be required to be present in order for this meeting to proceed:

- Secretary to the Board
- At least one parent representative

Parents may attend the lottery. All Applicants will be informed within 21 days from the closing date of the receipt of application whether their application was successful or not provided that all documentation requested has been received.

[Waiting List](#)

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 Mountrath Community 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 Mountrath Community School 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.

3. Decisions on applications

All decisions on applications for admission to Mountrath Community School will be based on the following:

- Our school's admission policy
- The school's annual Admission Notice
- 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 8 below in relation to applications received outside of the admissions period and 1 in relation to applications for places in years other than the First-Year 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.

4. 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 10 for further details).

5. Acceptance of an offer of a place by an applicant

In accepting an offer of admission from Mountrath Community 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 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.

6. 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 Mountrath Community 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 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 5 above.

7. 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.

8. 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- All late applicants will be placed at the end of the waiting list.

Declaration in relation to the non-charging of fees

The Board of Mountrath Community School 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.

9. Arrangements regarding students not attending religious instruction

Mountrath Community School offers **religious education** in all year groups as it promotes the holistic development of students and can contribute positively to their wellbeing in line with the principles of the Junior Cycle and Senior Cycle Frameworks and in the spirit of the Deed of Trust. It facilitates the intellectual, social, emotional, spiritual values and moral development of students and encourages respect for all members of our school communities. In addition, **religious education** supports the 'multi-denominational' aspect of our school's ethos as it provides opportunities for students to engage with questions around their own religious or non-religious beliefs and those of their peers.

In this context, it is important to understand the distinction between '**religious education**' and '**religious instruction**':

- *Religious education* is open to all students regardless of their commitment to any particular religion or worldview. It seeks to contribute to the spiritual and moral development of all students equally.
- *Religious instruction* is instruction in accordance with the rites, practices and teachings of a particular religion or denomination for students of that religious tradition.

Given that Religious Education, as distinct from Religious Instruction, is timetabled across our school at all levels, the legal requirement to advise of the option to opt-out of religious instruction does not arise.

10. Right to Appeal / Reviews

Right to Appeal & 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 is set out in the procedures determined by the Minister under section 29B of the Education Act 1998 which is 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 within three weeks of receiving the decision. The Board will subsequently have three weeks to reply. This procedure must occur 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 within three weeks of receiving the decision. The Board will subsequently have three weeks to reply. This procedure must occur prior to making an appeal under section 29 of the Education Act 1998.

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.

Signed: *Malachy Molloy*

Date: 11th September 2023

Malachy Molloy, Chairperson, Board of Management

Appendix 1: Policy for Admission to ASD and Hard of Hearing class

Mission Statement for ASD and Hard of Hearing Classes

The ASD special class was established in Mountrath Community School in the academic year 2023/2024 to provide a calm and ordered teaching and learning environment for students with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) and students who are hard of hearing who are attending mainstream subject classes in the school. Such students must have an appropriate diagnosis and be capable of benefiting from an inclusive education, including taking state examinations. The objective of the Special Classes is not to provide an alternative to the student attending mainstream classes in the school, but rather to facilitate the child in attending those classes notwithstanding having a diagnosis which might otherwise make attending mainstream classes difficult or impossible.

ASD Special Class Description

The ASD Special Classes consist of a maximum of 6 Students. Each of these students will attend mainstream classes in the school during the school week. Each student in this class will be educated in an inclusive way in a mainstream setting with the support in the ASD Special Class of the specialist teacher and SNAs. The Special Needs Assistants (SNAs) attached to the ASD Special Class group may not be available for each period that each student attends mainstream classes. The ASD classroom functions as a base room where these 6 students enrolled in the ASD Special Class receive specialist teaching in social skills. Teaching support will also be provided on an individual needs basis (SEN support or subject specific). The room also functions as a sanctuary where the students can spend school breaks and to which they can invite their friends. It is intended that students will become more socially independent over the course of second level education.

Mountrath Community School has been sanctioned for a special class with a maximum overall enrolment of 6 students, established to cater for the special educational needs of Students with Autism/Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD). Only applications in respect of students whose needs fall within the category of special educational needs provided for by the Special Class will be considered. In this respect, the school requires that such needs of the student be verified in a relevant report which has been prepared within the 12 months immediately preceding the Student's application to the Special Class.

Where the Special Class in Mountrath Community School is not oversubscribed, all students whose needs fall within the category of special educational needs provided for by the Special Class will be offered a place in the Special Class, subject to section 2 of this Admissions Policy. However, under Section 15(1) of the Education Act 1998 the board of management has a responsibility to provide, or cause to be provided, an appropriate education for each student at the school and has a duty of care to ensure as far as practicable the health and safety of the students and the staff. Where the admission of an applicant would pose a significant risk to the health and safety of the applicant or the students and staff of the school, or pose a significant risk to the right of other students to an appropriate education then such an application for admission may be refused by the Board of Management.

Enrolment for Children in Mountrath Community School's ASD Class

As the ASD Special Class is not a standalone unit, a placement will not be offered unless the applicant is capable of attending mainstream classes. A placement in the ASD Special Class would not be appropriate for any student whose needs are so complex or severe that they cannot attend mainstream classes. Applications for the ASD Special Class will be reviewed by the school admissions team, which will make recommendations

to the Board of Management. The decision to offer a place or not will be made by the Board of Management. Where an application is made for a place in the ASD Special Class, it will be made subject to all the provisions of the school's Admissions Policy, of which the Policy for Admission to the ASD Special Class is but one part. All educational, psychiatric, psychological or behavioural reports and assessments must be given to the school at time of application. The Board of Management reserves the right to refuse to enrol a student if all such reports are not supplied to the school. The ASD Special class will be co-educational and will cater for pupils aged between 12 and 18 years. Students in the ASD Special Class will still be subject to all school policies including the Code of Behaviour.

Criteria for Assessment of Applications to the ASD Special Class

- A place will not be offered to a student who needs one to one education for more than 16% of the school week.
- Priority will be given to applicants who the Board of Management deems would benefit most from the educational opportunities provided by the ASD Special Class mechanism, taking into account each student's academic ability.
- In particular, priority will be given to existing students currently enrolled in the school with a diagnosis of autism.
- Commitment to engage academically, personally and socially and the progress they have made in school will also be considered.
- Where an applicant has other special educational needs, this will be considered during the application process as this may detract from the applicant's ability to benefit fully from the educational experience in Mountrath Community School and the child may be better suited to a placement in another school.
- Each student must be of at least mild general intellectual ability.

The complexity of a student's needs (and in particular the severity of any emotional or behavioural disorders or issues) will be considered in the awarding of places to prevent possible disruption to peers in the ASD Special Class and in mainstream classes. Mountrath Community School is a mainstream school with limited resources to manage students with emotional or behavioural disorders or issues. The existing group dynamics/relationships within the class will be taken into consideration by the Board of Management when it is considering an application for enrolment in the class with regard to:

- a) Age profile of existing students
- b) Profile of special needs of other students in the class.

Please note Mountrath Community School reserves the right to refuse enrolment to students with SEN if their parents/ guardians refuse to allow the school to address those needs.

Each student must have a full current Psychological & Cognitive Assessment (i.e. dated within 12 months of the date of application), which must specify a diagnosis of Autism i.e. DSM-IV DSM-V or ICD-10, and a recommendation for special class placement from at least one of the following:

- a multi-disciplinary team
- a psychiatrist
- an educational psychologist
- Other HSE Services
- CAMHS

Only applications which meet these criteria will be considered. The parents/guardians and the prospective candidates for the class, if required, must meet the Principal/SEN department personnel and any other relevant parties before the student starts school.

Selection process and Oversubscription:

When the number of applications exceeds the number of places available, the published selection criteria as set out at below 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 Mountrath Community School is in a position to offer further places that become available in the Special Class 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.
- Priority will be given to current students already enrolled in the school with a diagnosis of ASD.
- 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 the Special Class in the following academic year, a new application must be made on behalf of that Student during the dates specified by the school as being the period when it will accept applications for the Special Class.

Mountrath Community School will apply the selection process as follows:

Having met the criteria for admission to the Special Class, applications are considered against the published selection criteria.

- Places will be offered in the first instance to those who meet the first criterion.
- Subsequently, where the school still has places available the remaining Applicants are considered against the second criterion and those Applicants who meet this criterion will be offered a place within the Special Class.
- This process is continuously carried out until all available places have been offered and accepted. Where two or more applications are tied in the foregoing selection process, Mountrath Community School will apply a random lottery to assign any available places in the Special Class, or on the waiting list, to those applications. N.B. The number of places available in a year group is subject to reduction in the event that a placement(s) in the Special Class is/are given to Student(s) from that year group, i.e. the selection process for the Special Class will be completed before the selection process for the mainstream year group and the number of Students who are offered a place in the Special Class will be the number by which the places in the relevant mainstream year group(s) are reduced.

If a transfer student is offered a place in the Special Class from the waiting list, the offer is subject to there being a place available in the relevant year group for that student. 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 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.

Selection criteria in order of priority:

Applications to the Special Class will only be considered if the student's needs fall within the specified category of special educational needs provided for by this class.

Subject to this requirement, in the event of oversubscription, the following criteria for admission to the Special Class will apply:

- i. If the student is currently enrolled in the school.
- ii. If the student has siblings currently enrolled in the school;
- iii. The greatest level of educational need, as determined by the Principal in consultation with the NCSE and/or NEPS, having considered the Relevant Report in respect of the child;
- iv. Whether the student attended one of the feeder schools listed in the glossary of terms;
- v. If the student has siblings currently previously enrolled in the school;

It should be noted that all placements are subject to review at the request of the parents and/or the school. The review will include input from all agencies involved, the parents/guardians and the school. Following the review, a recommendation may be made that the child be moved to an educational setting that can more appropriately meet his/her needs. Such a recommendation is not made lightly but is made with the objective of maximising the child's educational opportunities during the limited window available for such education.

This ASD Special Class Policy was adopted by the Board of Management of Mountrath Community School on the 11th September 2023.

Criteria for Assessment of Applications to the Hard of Hearing Class

The deaf/hard of hearing (DHH) class in Mountrath Community School has a maximum of 7 places and will cater for students from 1st year to 6th Year, inclusive. To gain admission to the DHH class, the student's diagnosed hearing loss must be their predominant barrier to accessing the school's curriculum. The diagnosed hearing loss (mild, moderate, severe or profound or a progressive hearing loss), must be assessed by a qualified Audiologist or Audiological Scientist, as set out by the HSE Audiological Review 2011.

The Principal in collaboration the Visiting Teacher for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Children (VTDHH) and the Special Education Needs Officer (SENO) shall consider all valid applications, whereby the decision will be informed by the Circular Sp Ed 02/05 and the school's Admission Policy. Students who meet the criteria for enrolment but are not offered a place for September, will remain on that year's waiting list in the event that a mid-school year vacancy should arise.

When a request has been made by a parent to enrol a child with a hearing loss into the DHH class, the school will request a letter of recommendation from the local VTDHH supporting the placement and a recent copy of the child's audiogram report from Beaumont Cochlear Implant Unit or HSE Audiology Services.

This Hard of Hearing Class Policy was adopted by the Board of Management of Mountrath Community School on the 11th September 2023.