

Admission Policy (with effect from 8 March 2016)

Introduction

Loreto Secondary School, Wexford is a single-sex Catholic Voluntary Secondary School for girls only, under the trusteeship of the Loreto Education Trust and committed to the principles of the Loreto Educational Philosophy. Our school's mission statement endeavours to give living expression to the ethos of our founder Mary Ward - "Truth, Freedom, Justice, Sincerity and Joy- as relevant today in Loreto, Wexford as for Mary Ward in 1609". The school is managed by a Board of Management (BOM). The admission of students to the school is a function of the Board of Management.

With effect from September 2017, the school will enrol 150 students into its 1st year group, thereby meaning that total enrolment will rise to 900 students over the ensuing six year period. Enrolment is also limited by the requirements of the school curriculum and organisation as prescribed from time to time by the Board of Management and as determined by Department of Education and Skills (DES) regulations and standards.

This policy is set out in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Education Act, 1998 and the Education (Welfare) Act, 2000. The school provides the curricular programme set down by the DES in accordance with Sections 9 and 30 of the Education Act, 1998.

This policy is also set out in line with equality legislation. The Equal Status Acts, 2000 – 2011, apply to educational establishments and prohibit discrimination – be it direct, indirect or by association - on nine specific grounds:

- Gender – being male or female.
- Marital status – being single, married, separated, divorced or widowed.
- Family status – being pregnant or having responsibility as a parent in relation to a person under 18 years or as a parent or carer to an adult with a disability.
- Sexual orientation – being heterosexual, homosexual, transgender or bisexual.
- Religion – having religious beliefs or having none.
- Age – applies to everybody over 18.
- Disability – covers all physical, sensory and intellectual disabilities.
- Race – includes race, colour, nationality or ethnic or national origins.
- Membership of the Traveller community – being a traveller.

In setting out this Admission Policy, the BOM trusts that parents will be assisted in relation to admission matters. Furthermore, the Principal, as Secretary to the BOM, will be happy to clarify any matters arising from this policy.

This Admissions Policy will be made available as follows:

- On the school's website, www.loretowexford.com.
- On request from the school.

Additionally, details of application dates will be advertised in local newspapers each September.

It is to be clearly understood that the school depends on the grants and teacher resources provided by the DES. All school policy must have regard to the resources and funding thereby made available. Within this context and set of parameters, the school supports the principles of :

- Inclusiveness, particularly with reference to the admission of children with a disability or other special educational need

- Equality of access to and participation in the school
- Parental choice in relation to admission
- Respect for the diversity of values, beliefs, traditions, languages and ways of life in society.

With the agreement of the Loreto Education Trust, this policy was adopted by the school's Board of Management on 8 March 2016 and replaces all earlier admission policies.

It is to be clearly understood that offers of places in the school are made in strict accordance with the most recently ratified Admission Policy i.e. 8 March 2016, and not under the terms of any earlier Admission Policy.

Board of Management's right to refuse admission

Loreto, Wexford welcomes students with special needs and will use the resources, both financial and personnel, provided by the DES to make reasonable accommodation for students with disabilities or special educational needs up to a nominal cost so that these students are free to participate in the life in the school in so far as is reasonably practicable.

However, the Board of Management reserves the right to refuse enrolment to any student in exceptional cases. Such an exceptional case could include the following:

- The applicant has special needs such that, even with additional resources available from the Department of Education and Skills, the school cannot meet such needs and/or provide the applicant with an appropriate education.
- In the opinion of the Board of Management, the applicant poses an unacceptable risk to other students, to school staff or to school property.
- The applicant is male. In accordance with the characteristic spirit of the Loreto, Wexford tradition, the school accepts only female students.
- The applicant's parents refuse to accept the school's Code of Behaviour.

Admission into 1st year in 2019

1. The school will accept fully completed Application Forms in respect of girls in 6th class national school (or its equivalent) for admission into our 1st year group in September 2019 from 8.15 a.m. on Thursday, 27 September 2018 until 4.00 p.m. on Friday, 19 October 2018.
2. These Application Forms are available from the School Secretary and Receptionist during normal school hours and may also be downloaded from the school's website – www.loretoexford.com
3. Upon receipt by the school of a completed Application Form (in hard copy only), a copy of the form – signed and dated by the School Secretary - will be posted or given to parents within 7 days and the information contained therein will be placed on the school's computer records. This information will be shared as necessary with the management authorities of other post-primary schools in an effort to prevent the holding of a place in more than one school by any individual student.
4. Parents must contact the school if they do not receive a copy of their completed Application Form.
5. It is the responsibility of parents to notify the school in writing of any changes in the detail contained on the Application Form.

6. Within 21 days of the closing date for applications, the Secretary of the BOM will implement Board policy to allocate 150 1st year places based on the following criteria as determined by the Board.

Category	Description
One	Sisters of students who are attending or who have previously attended Loreto, Wexford.
Two	Daughters of past students of Loreto, Wexford.
Three	Daughters of current and former non-casual staff, teaching and non-teaching, employed directly/engaged by the BOM.
Four	Remaining applicants up to a combined total in all four categories of 150 students. In the event of over-subscription, remaining places will be allocated by lottery.

7. Places are allocated in the following order:

- 1st Category one
- 2nd Category two
- 3rd Category three
- 4th Category four

In addition, the Board reserves the right to deal with any exceptional cases at its discretion.

8. The allocation of places will be carried out at a meeting of the Board of Management. In the event of over-subscription, the Board, having allocated places to those entitled to same in categories 1,2 and 3, will then conduct a lottery draw up to the point where 150 places, being the combined total from the four categories outlined above, have been allocated. A further draw will then be carried out to determine the remaining applicants' places on the waiting list. Draws, if required, will be conducted in the presence of a solicitor or peace commissioner appointed by the Board.
9. Parents will be given 14 days in which to accept or reject in writing a place that may be offered.
10. Confirmation of a place is conditional on the receipt by the school of the signed acceptance by a parent of the school's Code of Behaviour, Internet Acceptable Use and Anti-Bullying policies that may be viewed on www.loretowexford.com. It is at this stage that parents are requested to provide full information regarding any medical condition and/or special educational needs of a girl to whom a 1st year place has been offered.
11. To be eligible for admission to the school in September 2019 a girl must have reached 12 years of age by 1st January in 2020.
12. Should the demand for 1st year places exceed the available supply, the Secretary of the BOM will notify in writing the parents of girls to whom it is not possible to offer a place in accordance with the criteria above and inform them of their place on the waiting list as set out above.
13. Parents have the right to appeal this decision to the BOM. Such an appeal must be made in writing within 14 days of the date of the letter refusing enrolment and is only admissible if it relates to the procedures involved in the implementation of the Admission Policy. Parents must state in their written appeal if they wish to have a personal hearing at any Board meeting called for the purpose of considering such appeals.

14. A decision not to enrol a girl into the school may be appealed within 42 days of receipt of the BOM's decision to the DES under the terms of Section 29 of the Education Act, 1998 (Section 29 Appeals Administration Unit, Department of Education and Skills, Friars Mill Road, Mullingar, Co. Westmeath, N91 H30Y. Telephone: 0761-108588, web: www.education.ie)
15. The school will organise an Information Meeting in February of each year for girls who will be starting in 1st year the following September and their parents.

Admission into 1st year in 2020 and beyond

Beyond 2019, the school will only accept Application Forms between specified dates in the months of September / October in respect of girls in 6th class national school (or its equivalent) for admission into 1st year in the following September.

These dates will also be advertised in local newspapers in the preceding September and will also be available on the school website.

Students (girls only) transferring from other 2nd level schools

1. Any request to transfer a student (girls only) from another 2nd level school into Loreto, Wexford must be made on a standard Application Form available from the School Secretary or Receptionist. It may also be downloaded from the school's website – www.loretoWexford.com
2. Apart from exceptional cases, transfers will only be considered for the commencement of the academic year. Exceptional cases might include, for example, girls affected by medical, psychological, social, family or financial circumstances. These transfer requests will only be considered in the course of the school year if a genuine vacancy exists.
3. Completed Application Forms will only be accepted in the months of May and August for the following September. A decision on whether or not to enrol will be made within 21 days after 31 May and 31 August. This decision will be conveyed in writing to the person/s making the application.
4. The decision of the BOM on such an application will be based on the school's class size policy as set out below, available resources, DES regulations and any relevant Health and Safety concerns.

The following class size limits are applied:

Home Economics	20 students maximum
Art, Science subjects, Drama, Music	24 students maximum
All other subjects (except Choir)	30 students maximum

Maximum enrolment in each year group at present is 120 students. However, this will change on a phased basis as 150 students are admitted into each 1st year group beginning in September 2017.

5. Where the demand exceeds any available places in a particular year group, such places will be allocated as follows:

Category	Description
One	Sisters of students who are attending or who previously attended Loreto, Wexford.

Two	Daughters of past students of Loreto, Wexford.
Three	Daughters of current and former non-casual staff, teaching and non-teaching, employed directly/engaged by the BOM.
Four	In the event of over-subscription, remaining places will be allocated by lottery conducted by the Chairperson of the BOM in the presence of the Principal.

6. Places are allocated in the following order:

- 1st Category one
- 2nd Category two
- 3rd Category three
- 4th Category four

In addition, the Board reserves the right to deal with any exceptional cases at its discretion.

- 7. Confirmation of a place is conditional on the receipt by the school of the signed acceptance by a parent of the school's Code of Behaviour and Anti-Bullying Policy. It is at this stage that parents are requested to provide full information regarding any medical condition and/or special educational needs of a girl to whom a place has been offered. Additional information e.g. copies of school reports, may also be requested from parents by the Principal.
- 8. The full support services of the school will be made available as the student begins her course of study in Loreto, Wexford.
- 9. Parents have the right to appeal any refusal to enrol to the BOM. Such an appeal must be made in writing within 14 days of the date of the letter refusing enrolment and is only admissible if it relates to the procedures involved in the implementation of the Admission Policy. Parents must state in their written appeal if they wish to have a personal hearing at any Board meeting called for the purpose of considering such appeals.
- 10. A decision not to enrol a girl into the school may be appealed within 42 days of receipt of the BOM's decision to the DES under the terms of Section 29 of the Education Act, 1998 ((Section 29 Appeals Unit, Department of Education and Skills, Friars Mill Road, Mullingar, Co. Westmeath. N91 H30Y. Telephone: 0761-108588, web: www.education.ie)

Student medical conditions

The school requires information regarding any serious medical condition that a student may have that might have implications for the school in terms of (a) meeting the student's needs and (b) health and safety.

Parents are requested to outline the details of a student's medical conditions on the Student Enrolment and Health Declaration Form that will be issued by the school in respect of students who have been offered a place.

Special educational needs

Loreto, Wexford welcomes students with special needs and will use the resources, both financial and personnel, provided by the DES to make reasonable accommodation for students with disabilities or special educational needs up to a nominal cost so that these students are free to participate in the life in the school in so far as is reasonably practicable. It may take some time for the DES to process applications for reasonable accommodation. Parents are strongly advised to inform the school as early as possible and discuss their particular situation well in advance of making application.

While recognising and fully supporting parents' rights to have a school of their choice for their children, the school's ability to accept students with particular needs is dependent on the supply of resources, suitable to the needs of the individual student, being supplied by the DES.

Parents are requested to outline the details of a student's special educational needs on the Student Enrolment and Health Declaration Form that will be issued by the school in respect of students who have been offered a place. The Principal may request a meeting with the parents of the student to discuss the student's needs.

The BOM, having gathered all relevant information and professional documentation, assesses how the needs of these students can be met.

Contact will be made with the National Council for Special Educational Needs regarding special needs resources to which the student may be entitled.

The parents of the student may request a meeting with the Principal to discuss the student's educational or other needs.

Suspension and expulsion

In accordance with section 15 (2) (d) of the Education Act, 1998, the school now sets out its policy with regard to the suspension and expulsion of students:

(a) Suspension

Suspension is defined as a sanction requiring the student to absent herself from the school for a specified, limited period of school days.

The decision to suspend a student requires serious grounds such as that:

- The student's behaviour has had a seriously detrimental effect on the education of other students
- The student's continued presence in the school at this time constitutes a threat to safety
- The student is responsible for serious damage to property

A single incident of serious misconduct may be grounds for automatic suspension e.g. assault, gross defiance, smoking, drug or alcohol offences.

In considering a term of suspension, the following factors will be relevant:

- The nature and seriousness of the behaviour
- The context of the behaviour
- The impact of the behaviour
- The interventions tried to date
- Whether suspension is a proportionate response
- The possible impact of suspension

The BOM has delegated the power to suspend for a maximum of 3 days to the Principal. With the approval of the Chairperson of the BOM, a suspension of 4 or 5 days may be imposed by the Principal. A suspension in excess of 5 days and for not more than 10 days can only be imposed by the BOM. Additionally, any suspension that would bring the total number of days for which the student has been suspended in the current school year to 20 days or more must be formally reviewed by the BOM and notified to the Educational Welfare Officer.

Fair procedures based on the principles of natural justice will be followed by the school in the case of all suspensions, as follows:

- The right to be heard

The Principal will inform the student and her parents in writing of the complaint, how and by whom it will be investigated and that it could result in suspension. The student and her parents will be given an opportunity to reply to the Principal's letter within 5 working days before a decision is made and before any sanction is imposed.

- The right to impartiality

This requires that the investigation of a complaint is separated from the process of making a decision with regard to sanctions. Accordingly, the Principal will arrange for another member or members of staff to conduct the investigation and to present a full report on the facts of the case, as well as any other relevant information, to the Principal. The Principal will then decide whether to impose suspension on a student.

The Principal will notify the student and her parents in writing of a decision to suspend. Such a letter will confirm the period of suspension and reason/s for it as well as the right of appeal to the BOM or to the DES as relevant. A suspension will not be served while an appeal is being processed except in the case of behaviour that endangers members of the school community.

(b) Expulsion

Expulsion will only be resorted to by the BOM in the most extreme cases of indiscipline and only after every effort at rehabilitation has failed and every other sanction has been exhausted. Any decision of the BOM to expel a student may be appealed under Section 29 of the Education Act, 1998, as explained below.

The following behaviours, however, may be grounds for expulsion, even if for a first offence, and after the following of due process and fair procedures:

- A serious threat of violence against another student or member of staff
- Actual violence or physical assault
- Supplying illegal drugs to other students in the school
- Sexual assault

In considering the expulsion of a student, the following factors will be relevant:

- The nature and seriousness of the behaviour
- The context of the behaviour
- The impact of the behaviour
- The interventions tried to date
- Whether expulsion is a proportionate response
- The possible impact of expulsion

Procedures in respect of expulsion

- A detailed investigation carried out under the direction of the Principal that will allow for the student and her parents to be given every opportunity to respond to the alleged misbehaviour
- A recommendation to the BOM by the Principal and the allowing of the parents to attend the relevant part of that BOM meeting and/or to make a written and/or oral submission to the BOM
- Consideration by the BOM of the Principal's recommendation and the holding of a special hearing to consider expelling a student
- BOM deliberations and actions following the hearing including the informing of parents and the Educational Welfare Officer (if expulsion is being recommended)
- Consultations arranged by the Educational Welfare Officer

- Confirmation of the decision to expel

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