



Portlaoise College

**Admissions Policy
1st Year to Leaving Certificate**

April 2018

INTRODUCTION

This Admissions Policy is written for parents and students who wish to find out about the school and how to apply for admission to this school.

This policy is rooted in the school's fundamental aim of providing a comprehensive system of Post Primary education open to all the children of the community. The policy sets out the procedures to be followed in the following circumstances:

- Students applying for a place in First Year
- Students from outside of the school applying for a place in any other year group or programme.
- Students applying to transfer from another Second Level school.
- Students applying to repeat any year of any programme within the school including repeating the Leaving Certificate programme
- Students from within the school applying for a place on any programme within the school (Leaving Certificate, LCVP, T.Y., LCA, J.C.S.P., etc)

PORTLAOISE COLLEGE

Portlaoise College is a co-educational, multi-denominational, multicultural post primary school.

MISSION STATEMENT

That Portlaoise College encourages its students and teachers to develop their talents fully; that the school provides the students with a good education and prepares them for work, life and living; that the school respects the full dignity of everyone; that the vision and mission is fully understood and shared by teachers, students and management of the school, working together in Christian harmony.

CURRENT LEGISLATION

Education Act 1998

Section 9 (1) of the Ed. Act 1998 specifies that “A recognised school shall subject to this Act and in particular section 15(2d), establish and maintain an Admissions Policy, which provides for maximum accessibility to the school”

Section 14(2)

A board shall fulfil in respect of the school, the functions assigned to that school by this Act,

Section 15(2)

A board shall perform the functions conferred on it and on a school and in carrying out its functions.

Section 15(2d)

States that the Board Of Management shall publish, in such manner as the board, with the agreement of the patron, considers appropriate, the policy of the school concerning admission to and participation in the school, including the policy of the school relating to the expulsion and suspension of students and admission to and participation by students with disabilities or who have other special educational needs and ensure that policy principles of equality and the right of parents to send their children to a school of the parents’ choice are respected and such directions as may be made from time to time by the Minister, having regard to the characteristic spirit of the school and the constitutional rights of all persons concerned, are complied with.

Education (Welfare) Act 2000
Admission of child to recognised school

Section 9 of the Education Act states that a recognised school shall provide education to students, which is appropriate to their abilities and needs and Section (9a) ensures that the educational needs of all students, including those with a disability or other special educational needs, are identified and provided for.

States 19(1) that the Board of Management of a recognised school shall not refuse to admit a student in respect of whom an application to be admitted be made, except where such refusal is in accordance with the policy of the recognized school concerned published under section 15(2)(d) of the Act of 1998.

States 19(2) that the parent of a child who has made an application referred to in subsection (1) shall provide the recognised school concerned with such information as may be prescribed by the Minister.

States that in 19(3) that as soon as practicable, but not later than 21 days after a parent has provided, in accordance with subsection (2), such information as may be subscribed by the Minister there under, the Board of Management of the school concerned shall make a decision in respect of the application concerned and inform the parent in writing thereof.

The Equal Status Act, 2000

Sections 5 & 7 (2) prohibits discrimination on the grounds of “gender, marital status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, race or membership of the Travelling Community” regarding admission, access to programmes, participation in the school or regarding expulsion or any other sanction.

The Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act 2004

This Act outlines in Section 3 the preparation of an education plan by school (including steps preliminary to such preparation), Sections 4 & 5 referring to the assessment of the child and modes of assessment. Section 7 outlines the resources available to the school including physical classroom accommodation, class size, teaching and financial resources and is also subject to the capacity of the school to provide for the educational needs of those who apply for admission.

The implementation of the curriculum, the pastoral care programme, the school development plan and school policy have due regard to the resources and funding available. 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.

OUR SCHOOL

We are committed to providing a holistic education with the aim of developing the academic, cultural, sporting, moral and spiritual needs of our students.

Ethos and Philosophy

The school ethos is Christian and each individual is respected regardless of religious persuasion and is guaranteed access to the educational facilities at the school.

The curriculum is designed with the modern world in mind and students are equipped with the skills and qualifications necessary to confront any problems they may encounter in life.

The school is managed by a Board of Management and offers a Christian environment, fostering the emotional, moral and social development of students.

The School Provides

- Academic excellence within a caring environment
- Committed experience and highly qualified staff
- A Pastoral Care structure

- Good discipline practice
- Extensive educational facilities
- Broad extra-curricular programmes

Board of Management

Under the Education Act 1998, the Board of Management is a legal entity with legal responsibilities and obligations.

The Board of Management consists of parents' representatives, teacher representatives, E.T.B representatives and Community representatives.

The parent representatives must be parents/guardians of students who are presently enrolled in the school.

Teaching Staff

The teaching staff at Portlaoise College are employed by County Laois/Offaly E.T.B and are paid by the Department of Education and Science.

Curriculum

- Junior Certificate
- Junior Certificate Schools Programme
- Transition Year
- Leaving Certificate Applied Programme
- Leaving Certificate
- Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme

The Parents Association

Provision is made in the Education Act 1998 to allow parents of students of a school to set up a Parents Association. The Act states that:

The parents of students of a recognised school may establish and maintain from among their number, a parents' association for the school and membership of that association shall be open to all parents of students of that school.

The Parents' Association in our school works with the Principal, Staff and Board of Management to build effective co-operation and partnership between home and school. The role of the Parents' Association is set down in the Education Act 1998 as follows:

A Parents' Association shall promote the interests of the students in a school in co-operation with the Board, Principal, Teachers and Students.

The Education Act also sets out two broad tasks for a parents, association which are:

- To advise the Principal or the Board on matters relating to the school
- *To adopt a programme of activities, which will promote the involvement of parents in the operation of the school, in consultation with the Principal.*

The Student Council

Portlaoise College has a very active and enthusiastic Student Council.

A new Student Council is elected every year. It is made up of elected representatives from each of the class groups who do their best to give their fellow students a voice in school matters. They are also actively involved in school policies and make a very important contribution to the school community.

School Calendar

A comprehensive school calendar detailing school holidays, parent teacher meetings, examination dates and other important events is posted to parents annually and also included in the Homework Journal.

First Year Enrolment

Eligibility

Applicants for 1st year must have reached the required age, which is 12 on the 1st January in the calendar year following the student's entry into 1st year, (birth certificate must be shown), have completed 6th class standard in primary school and be willing to take an Assessment Test in November/December of year of

application. All other applications over the above age will be treated as new enrolments and dealt with on a case by case basis subject to all other terms laid out in this Admissions Policy being adhered to.

Admission Procedures

Admission to Portlaoise College is by completion and acceptance of the approved application form which has been duly signed by Parents/Guardians. All relevant documentation relating to enrolment i.e. birth certificate or passport, PPS Number, passport photograph and administration fee must also be submitted with application in order for application to be complete. Applications submitted without the necessary documentation will be deemed to be incomplete and will be returned for completion. All completed application forms with necessary documentation will be date-stamped and applicants will be awarded places on a first come, first served basis.

Enrolment for 1st Year students takes place each year in Term One as set by school management. The Open Night for Parents/Guardians and their children takes place in September in the preceding year of entry. Application forms and prospectuses are distributed alongside other relevant information to all the feeder primary schools. They are also available on the school's website or directly from the school. Parents/Guardians are then invited to attend an Open Evening where application procedures, curriculum subject options, school code of conduct and ethos are outlined. All applications should be made not later than the closing date, which is 26th October 2018.

Late Applicants

All applications after the closing date will be treated as late applicants. Students will be placed on a waiting list once the closing date has passed and will be dealt with on a case by case basis. The position on the waiting list is determined by the date of a complete application form.

Late applications and applications for enrolment at other times during the year will have to make formal contact with the school office to arrange a meeting with the Principal.

Place offer

Parents/Guardians of applicants will be notified of places within 21 days of applications i.e. Closing Date. The Principal after reviewing all applications and subject to the school being able to meet the applicant's needs, and subject to the approval of the Board of Management, will decide on the admission of the applicant. For the most part it is envisaged that enrolment upon a fully completed

application will be automatic. Parents/Guardians who have been offered a place must confirm their non-acceptance within 7 days of the date of offer.

Assessment Test

Students will be advised of the outcome of their application to enrol prior to sitting the school's assessment test. This test is held in November/December each year. All applicants will be obliged to sit for the school's assessment test. A candidate who is absent for the test without good reason (as determined by the school) will lose their place. In that case, the place will be offered to the next student on the waiting list.

Parental Responsibilities

Parents/Guardians are requested to supply evidence of ability to meet the conditions of the Admissions Policy of the Board where requested to do so.

Students with Parents/Guardians must accept the school Code of Conduct, ethos and other policies as sanctioned by the Board of Management. Confirmation in writing of that acceptance is required of parents/guardians and student. The signing of the application form by parent/guardians and students will commit parties to that acceptance.

For the duration of the student's tenure in the school parents/guardians will be expected to participate fully with their child's education including attendance at all school meetings as requested by the school.

Students from Abroad

Students intending on enrolling from abroad must supply all the relevant reports including references from primary schools and second level schools and from teachers where appropriate. *Students may be asked to sit an English language assessment test as outlined by the Department of Education and Science.*

Feeder Schools

Portlaoise College welcomes applications to enrol from all schools but in the event of an over-subscription to enrol, preference will be given to students who have attended the main feeder primary schools as listed below:

- Scoil Bhride, Knockmay, Portlaoise
- Holy Family National School, Portlaoise
- Gaelscoil, Phortlaoise
- Maryborough National School, Portlaoise
- Educate Together, Portlaoise
- Ballyfin National School
- Barnashrone National School
- St Colmans National School, Stradbally
- St John's National School Killenard
- Cosby National School, Stradbally
- Ratheniska National School
- Timahoe National School
- Ballyroan boys and girls National School
- The Heath National School
- Emo National School
- The Rock National School
- Raheen National School
- Rath National School
- St Patricks, National School, Mountmellick
- St Joseph's, National School, Mountmellick
- St Pauls National School, Mountmellick

Over Subscription

In the event of an over-subscription by the **closing date** as set down by the school each year and all other enrolment requirements being satisfied, it will be necessary to offer places in the following order/stages:

1. Siblings
2. Students of staff members
3. Students from feeder schools
4. Students from schools other than the feeder schools

If there is over subscription after stage 3 above a lottery system for all Students from feeder Schools will take place.

If there is over subscription after stage 4 above a lottery system for all Students from non-feeder Schools will take place.

Criteria for Enrolment

The Board of Management may set a maximum limit on the number of places available in the college in any given year. The Board will set such limits based on the availability of resources, facilities and staff, and bearing in mind that certain

maximum class sizes will pertain in certain subjects (e.g. 24 in Practical Classes, 20 in Home Economics)

Classes are arranged on a mixed ability basis in 1st year. From 2nd year onwards, classes are banded for Irish, English and Maths. Grades are used in all years to determine the level at which a student will study a subject.

The college will assess the academic standards of all those accepted. This assessment will not be used as a criterion for the exclusion of any student from the college. Applicants and their primary school teachers will be informed of the date of the assessment and the type of assessment that will be given.

Mid-Term Entry, Enrolment Post First Year or Transfer

Portlaoise College may enrol a student in the college during the school year subject to the following conditions:

- The terms of the college's Admissions Policy will apply.
- The college will seek information and/or reports from the student's former/current school regarding the applicant's record in such areas as attendance, disabilities, special needs, and any other matters relating to the student's educational progress and deportment as the college management may consider appropriate.
- The college reserves the right to question the suitability of a transfer during the school year in the best interest of the student.
- Portlaoise College does not encourage the transfer of students into the college during examination years i.e. 3rd and 6th Year. Such applications will be considered on a case by case basis.
- Consideration will be given to such matters as the consequences of a mid-year transfer on the student's academic and all round progress.

The college will take due account of:

- Portlaoise College
- Admissions Policy,
- the availability of space in the college,
- the suitability of the subjects taught and the levels at which they are taught, and the subject options available to the student. It is understood that it may not be possible to provide all the subject options or levels that the transfer applicant has had in her current/previous school, and that Portlaoise College does not guarantee a place in any subject or course to a student

who transfers during the school year or during the progress of a programme.

- The college may consult the TULSA Officer concerning an applicant.

If the foregoing criteria are observed students may be enrolled into other years following interview by the Principal or Deputy Principal. As such students will have attended other post primary institutions, these institutions will have prior responsibility for their post primary education. Admission will strictly depend on the students' previous school reports, behaviour, suspensions, expulsion from previous school and also take into account the following: options availability, class vacancy and commitment to school discipline and ethos.

Before admission of a student registered in another recognised secondary school, the Principal of that school will be informed in writing of the requested enrolment and details will be requested relating to the student's attendance and such other matters relating to the child's educational progress as the Principal considers appropriate. Before any offer of enrolment is made, all relevant reports together with any vital or important information relating to the student's academic history, health, behaviour and any other matter will have been submitted to the school authorities for consideration. The Board of Management may decide from time to time to seek other relevant information about a prospective student.

The Principal or other teacher(s) may request a meeting with a student and his / her parents / guardians as part of the enrolment process.

The college authorities endeavour to provide an ordered learning environment which fosters discipline and respect. Acceptance of a place in the college is deemed to be an acceptance of the ethos, educational aims, code of conduct and current policies.

Parents and student applicants will be required to sign a declaration stating that they have read and that they endorse the ethos, educational aims and policies of the college and that they accept the terms of the college's Code of Conduct and Rules.

Transfers from other Second Level Schools

Pupils may transfer to the school subject to:

- The School's Admission Policy.
- The school authorities being satisfied regarding the reasons for application.

While it is appreciated that in certain exceptional circumstances transfers are unavoidable (e.g. a change of residence or a family moving into the area) as a matter of general policy transfers *to* the school are discouraged in the overall interests of the continuity of the student's education.

An application to transfer is defined as one from a student who has previously enrolled in another school in or outside the catchment area or from a student who makes application after the commencement of the autumn school term. It is not the policy of the Board of Management to accept transfer applications from students already enrolled in local post primary schools, except in exceptional circumstances. Where the Board is satisfied that such exceptional circumstances do exist, the following considerations and procedures will apply:

- a) Reasons for transfer should be clearly stated.
- b) The following documentation should be supplied:
 - Completed enrolment form *with necessary documentation as outlined previously*.
 - The two most recent reports from the pupil's previous school. A written reference/report from the previous school
 - Two additional written references, dated within one month of the date of application, from a local Youth Club/Sport Club or similar organisation and/or a member of an Garda Siochana or a person of similar standing in the community can be requested.
 - A Statement of Special Needs, if relevant.
- c) This college also reserves the right to request a confidential reference from the authorities in previous school(s).
- d) The Board of Management reserves the right to refuse an application which might include:
 - An established prior record of poor behaviour
 - Lack of adequate resources to cater for particular needs
 - Disruption to teaching and learning

Applications to transfer into the school will be considered having regard to the overall wellbeing of existing pupils and the availability of physical space and resources. Following consideration by the Board of Management of individual applications to transfer into the school, where the Board has good grounds for forming the fair and reasonable opinion that it would not be in the best interests of the existing students to accept such a transfer, it is the policy of the school to refuse to enrol such applicants.

Note: Applications will not be accepted from students who have not exhausted current Section 29 appeals and are the subject of ongoing disciplinary proceedings in another school which includes any ongoing statutory appeals procedures in accordance with the Education Act 1998 or The Education for Persons with Special Needs Act 2004.

The Board of Management reserves the right to refuse an application for admission of a student from other second level schools. Mid-cycle transfers are discouraged in the interest of the student's education.

Special Educational Needs

The Board of Management welcomes students with special educational needs who fulfil the regular enrolment requirements.

To ascertain the ability of the college to cater for the needs of such a student and to become familiar with her needs, it will be necessary for the college to access the student's records and individual educational programme from the primary or other school well in advance of his/her entry to Portlaoise College.

Parents/Guardians are required to submit all relevant psychological/educational reports or other requirements pertaining to Special Needs students at the time of enrolment. Failure to do so may result in a delay in processing the application.

The college will also require parental / guardian permission for access to any relevant medical or psychological reports. In the absence of such reports, the college will require parental / guardian permission to request a National Educational Psychological Services (NEPS) assessment or similar psychological assessment. The purpose of this assessment will be to assist the college in establishing the educational needs of the applicant. Portlaoise College in co-operation with the NEPS or other relevant authority, will inform the Department of Education and Science of whatever resources, equipment or personnel will be required to cater for the special needs of the applicant.

Subject to the provision and availability of the necessary resources, the Principal and/or relevant teacher will, as soon as possible, arrange to meet with the parents / guardians of the student to discuss the student's needs and the college's capacity to meet those needs.

The college recognises the need for liaison and co-operation between Portlaoise College and the teachers in the primary schools as well as with the parents / guardians of students with special needs, and will, subject to the availability of adequate resources endeavour to facilitate the process of transition of such students from primary to post-primary education.

ASD Unit

Parents/Guardian who wants to enrol a child in the ASD Unit will do so in accordance with the Admissions procedures outlined in this policy. Enrolment will be on full consultation with their parents, the SENO, the Learning Support Co-ordinator and the Principal. The ASD Unit is a six placement unit provided by the Department of Education and Science for the purpose of ensuring that Students with an Autistic Spectrum condition access mainstream provision and have full curriculum engagement to complete the Junior Cert and Leaving Cert.

Portlaoise College will encourage students to be involved in as much curricular and extra-curricular activities as suits the student's needs.

Right of the Board to Refuse

An application to enrol /transfer to Portlaoise College is made in the first instance to the Secretary of the Board of Management/Principal who may then refer the application to the Board of Management.

The Board of Management of Portlaoise College reserves the right to refuse an application for admission to the college in certain circumstances.

Right of Appeal

Under Section 29 of the Education Act 1998, parents / guardians of students, or students over the age of 18 years, who have been refused admission to the college, have the right to appeal such a refusal by the Board of Management to the Secretary General of the Department of Education and Science. Appeals must be lodged within 42 days of having been informed of such refusal.

Repeating years/excessive time missed

In general, it is envisaged that students will progress from one academic year to the next. However, if students miss an excessive amount of time due to illness or any reason, it may be necessary for the student to repeat the year taking into account the educational welfare of the student. Students who have missed excessive amounts of time as deemed by the Principal and/or who have not completed their Christmas and summer exams may at the discretion of the Principal be required to repeat a year to ensure their academic progress.

Parents of students who wish for a student to repeat a year may put a request in writing to the Principal outlining the reasons for a student to repeat a year. The student's academic records and attendance records would then be examined by the Principal. Repeating of years may be granted if a student has had a medically certified illness or bereavement or any other extenuating circumstance as decided by the Principal in consultation with the parents.

It would not be general practice for a student to repeat years due to poor academic progress alone if extenuating circumstances outlined above did not apply.

Decisions relating to the repeating of academic years are at the discretion of the Principal and also in accordance with the following Department Circulars M57/87, M33/89, M47/92 and M2/95.

Admission to Specific Programmes or Subjects (or Subjects at a Specific Level) from Students within the School

Applicants to specific programmes apply through a standard application form which is distributed to all 3rd Year and TY students at the annual options evening in March. All applicants are then subject to an interview to obtain their suitability. Applicants are then notified of the outcome of the selection process. Offers are based on students meeting certain criteria which will also apply if there are limits in T.Y., LCA., or any other specific year or specific subjects.

- Interview
- Behavioural record
- Attendance record
- Performance record in subject previously
- Student's commitment to the full programme
- Student's participation in all aspects of the programme
- Student's choosing T.Y. as a final year in school is not permitted

In relation to the above courses, an application process will apply. The school will be the final arbiters of who enters any of the programmes listed above.

Enrolment into LCA programme is only accepted internally and cannot come from outside the school.

Withdrawal from the College

If a student is moving schools and/or moving to a new area, the parents of that student must submit to the school notice of withdrawal in writing two weeks prior to the date of withdrawal. They must state the reason for withdrawal and the proposed destination of the student. The parents and student will then be invited to meet with the Principal/Deputy Principal for an exit interview.

In general it is envisaged that report/attendance records and references would be forwarded to the destination school at the request of the Principal of the new destination school, but they may also be forwarded to parents once a request has been submitted in writing. Once withdrawal has been agreed, students must return their books and any other equipment.

The Principal will inform TULSA should she/he have a concern that the student is not enrolling in another school.

Review of the Admissions Policy

The Board of Management of Portlaoise College will review this policy from time to time as appropriate, but in any case at the commencement of each new Board of Management, in consultation with the relevant partners.

The Board may, subject to relevant legislation, and subject to Department of Education and Science regulations, alter or amend any section of the policy as appropriate.

This policy was adopted by the Board of Management of Portlaoise College:

Signed: _____

Chairperson
Board of Management

Date: _____

Date of next review: _____