

Admission Policy of Balla Secondary School

School Address: Balla, Castlebar, Co Mayo F23 KT65

Roll number: 64500G

School Patron: Balla Secondary School CLG

1. Introduction

This Admission Policy complies with the requirements of the Education Act 1998, the Education (Admission to Schools) Act 2018 and the Equal Status Act 2000. In drafting this policy, the board of management of the school has consulted with school staff, the school patron and with parents of children attending the school.

The policy was approved by the school patron on 14/09/2020. It is published on the school's website and will be made available in hardcopy, on request, to any person who requests it.

The relevant dates and timelines for *Balla Secondary 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.

2. Characteristic spirit and general objectives of the school

Balla Secondary School is a Catholic co-educational voluntary secondary school with a Catholic ethos under the trusteeship of Balla Secondary School CLG.

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

- (a) The full and harmonious development of all aspects of the person of the pupil, including the intellectual, physical, cultural, moral and spiritual aspects; and
- (b) A living relationship with God and with other people; and
- (c) A philosophy of life inspired by belief in God and in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus; and
- (d) The formation of the pupils in the Catholic faith,

and which school provides religious education in accordance with the doctrines, practices and traditions of the Roman Catholic Church, and/or such ethos and/or characteristic spirit as may be determined or interpreted from time to time by the Irish Episcopal Conference.

In accordance with S.15 (2) (b) of the Education Act, 1998 the Board of Management of Balla Secondary School shall uphold, and be accountable to the patron for so upholding, the characteristic spirit of the school as determined by the cultural, educational, moral, religious, social, linguistic and spiritual values and traditions which inform and are characteristic of the objectives and conduct of the school.

Mission Statement

Our mission statement permeates throughout every aspect of school life. Each person in our school is recognised as an individual, with their own characteristics, talents and needs. We have a caring and committed staff, who place great emphasis on the holistic development of students, as well as encouraging all students to achieve their academic potential. The role of parents/guardians is considered to be of great significance to us. Creating an environment where school and home, work together to create the truly unique individual your son or daughter is capable of becoming, is the central aim for all of us. The school community recognises and is grateful for the support from Board of Management, Parents Association and Student Council, in maintaining the unique atmosphere where students can work together in harmony and happiness.

Ethos

Balla Secondary School is a Christian community where all members grow to value their own worth as persons, their links with their family and the interdependence of all people.

We aim to be inclusive, to provide for the education of the whole person in the fullest sense, to be especially mindful of the disadvantaged and those with special needs.

Members of our school community co-operate in an educational experience which promotes the formation of young people in a value-based, Christian education in the Catholic tradition. However, we welcome students from other religious traditions and we are aware of and sensitive to their needs.

3. Admission Statement

Balla Secondary 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.

Balla Secondary School will cooperate with the NCSE in the performance by the Council of its functions under the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act 2004 in relation to the provision of education to children with special educational needs, including in particular by the provision and operation of a special class or classes when requested to do so by the Council. Balla Secondary School will comply with any direction served on the board or the patron under section 37A and 67(4) (b).

Post-primary denominational schools

Balla Secondary School is a school whose objective is to provide education in an environment which promotes certain religious values and does not discriminate where it admits a student of catholic beliefs in preference to others.

Schools with special education class(es)

Balla Secondary School is a school which has established a class for students on the Autism spectrum, with the approval of the Minister for Education and Skills, which provides an education exclusively for students with a category or categories of Autism specified by the Minister and may refuse to admit to the class a student who does not have the category of needs specified.

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

Balla Secondary School with the approval of the Minister for Education and Skills, has established a class to provide an education exclusively for students with a diagnosis of Autism.

5. Admission of Students

This school shall admit each student seeking admission except where –

- a) the school is oversubscribed (please see [section 6](#) below for further details)
- b) a parent of a student, when required by the principal in accordance with section 23(4) of the Education (Welfare) Act 2000, fails to confirm in writing that the code of behaviour of the school is acceptable to him or her and that he or she shall make all reasonable efforts to ensure compliance with such code by the student

All denominational schools

Balla Secondary School is a catholic coeducational school and may refuse to admit as a student a person who is not of catholic belief where it is proved that the refusal is essential to maintain the ethos of the school.

School with special education class(es)

The special class attached to Balla Secondary School provides an education exclusively for students with a diagnosis of Autism and the school may refuse admission to this class, where the student concerned does not have the specified category of special educational needs provided for in this class.

6. Oversubscription (this section must be completed by all schools including schools that do not anticipate being oversubscribed)

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:

First Year Enrolment Criteria

In the event of the number of applicants exceeding the number of places available, the following points system will be applied and applicants will be placed in rank order of their highest total score:

| Category | Description | Points |
|----------|--|-----------|
| 1a. | A pupil with sibling currently attending Balla Secondary School or | 22 Points |
| 1b. | A pupil with a sibling who previously attended Balla Secondary School | 9 Points |
| 2 | A child of a current member of staff of the school | 22 Points |
| 3 | A pupil attending one of the schools situated in the Parish of Balla I. Balla National School II. Belcarra National School III. Manulla National School IV. Clogher National School | 15 Points |
| 4 | A pupil attending one of the schools named alphabetically as follows: I. Ballintubber National School II. Ballyheane National School III. Ballyvary Central National School IV. Bohola National School V. Breaffy National School VI. Burriscarra National School VII. Craggagh National School VIII. Errew National School IX. Facefield National School X. Mayo Abbey National School XI. Mountpleasant National School | 15 Points |

| | | |
|---|---|--------------|
| 5 | Where Balla Secondary School is the nearest post primary school to the pupil's home (utility bill will be required as proof of address) | 10 points |
| 6 | A pupil whose parent/guardian is a past pupil of Balla Secondary School | 8 Points |
| 7 | All other applicants | 5 Points max |

Places will be allocated in rank order until all available places have been filled.

The names of the remaining applicants will be placed on a waiting list in rank order of their total score

Special Class Application and Enrolment Criteria:

It is the policy of the Department of Education and Skills that a maximum of six students are enrolled in an ASD Class. Students will follow the five or six year programme as provided in mainstream classes or equivalent.

The ASD Classes are a valued part of Balla Secondary School. The ASD education programme aims to develop opportunities for the integration of its pupils in the various aspects of school life. Due consideration is also given to the needs of the pupils in the ASD Class and their capacity to integrate comfortably with their peers. The school authorities will determine the appropriate programme for each child, having consulted with parents and the professionals/team working with pupils e.g. psychologists/psychiatrists/speech and language therapists, teachers and Special Needs Assistants, etc. The ASD Admissions Committee will examine all applications and determine if the applicant meets the criteria. Every student must apply for admission to the school in the normal manner as outlined in the School's Admission Policy. All students will be subject to the terms and conditions of the Balla Secondary School Admissions Policy including catchment area criteria.

Applications should be made to the school on a standard application form. This application form will be available for the School and the applicant must indicate on the application form that they are seeking a place in the ASD class. Applications for admission to the ASD class will not be accepted during the school year save in exceptional circumstances and not after the application & enrolment process for the following school year has commenced. The completion of a written application form for placement of a student does not mean an automatic right to placement in the ASD class.

The student applying for a place in the ASD Class must have:

- A psychological/psychiatric report which clearly specifies a diagnosis of A.S.D. (without significant intellectual disability) to be the primary impediment to a student's ability to learn in a mainstream classroom setting.
- The diagnostic criteria for Autistic Spectrum Disorder as outlined in the DSM-1V/ ICD 10 will apply.
- A detailed psychological and cognitive assessment noting the student's cognitive ability for the sole purpose of ensuring that the support structures in place at Balla Secondary School can fully facilitate the student with ASD both within the special class and wider school environment.
- A detailed psychological and cognitive assessment noting that the student is assessed to be within the mild/general to above average range of intellectual ability

- Assessment report/s must indicate that the student will benefit from participation in an 'Autistic Class' setting in a mainstream school and would also access mainstream class.
- All reports completed in respect of the applicant's diagnosis must be made available to the school. These reports must have been completed within 2 years prior to the date of application.
- Each application should be supported by a report from the primary school or secondary school outlining the student's academic, social emotional and behavioural needs and outlining the current extent of social inclusion.
- No application will be considered valid until all relevant documents and information have been furnished to the school.

All applications to the ASD class will be reviewed by the Admissions Panel. (Please see below)
The Admissions Panel will be given the Psychologist's report outlining the levels of need and the care required by the student in this special class.

Where the Admissions Panel deems a report to be out of date, it will require that the family obtain an up to date Educational / Psychological report.

The Parents / guardians and the student concerned will be interviewed following application. Staff of the School will endeavour to contact previous placement/s and observe the prospective student in his/her current educational setting.

The school may ask for further reports or information which may impact on the planning for the applicant's educational progress.

The Board of Management reserves the right to make the final decision in respect of all applications in the interest of the applicant and of the school as a whole.

The student's continuing enrolment will be reviewed periodically in the light of his/her progress and adaptation to the school.

In certain circumstances and following assessment, Balla Secondary School may be unable to meet the needs of an ASD student on the grounds that:

- They are considered a risk to themselves and others
- Balla Secondary School would not have the capacity to meet their diagnosed needs
- Admission or the continued enrolment of the student would make it impossible to deliver, or have a serious detrimental effect on, the provision of an education service to the applicant and to other students.

Admissions Panel:

All applications to the ASD Class will be reviewed by the Admissions Panel which may consist of the following:

- I. School Principal
- II. Deputy Principal
- III. The Special Educational Needs/ASD Co-ordinator
- IV. Any other relevant 'Special Educational Needs' professional as deemed appropriate by the above.

Function of the Admissions Panel:

- I. To review all applications and all documentation relevant to a student applying for a place in The ASD Classes.
- II. To verify the Class's suitability in meeting the needs of the applicant.
- III. To make recommendations based on these findings to the school's Board of Management

Extent of Accommodation: The ASD Classes will cater for a maximum number of six (6) students in each class in any given academic year.

The Role of the Board of Management: The Board of Management reserves the right to appoint other members to the Admissions Panel as necessary and to seek the advice of external experts if required.

The final decision on any individual enrolment matter will be made by the Board of Management.

Special Class Review Process

A student's continuing enrolment will be reviewed periodically in the light of his/her progress and adaptation to the school.

In certain circumstances and following assessment, Balla Secondary School may be unable to meet the needs of an ASD student on the grounds that:

- They are considered a risk to themselves and others
- Balla Secondary School would not have the capacity to meet their diagnosed needs
- Admission or the continued enrolment of the student would make it impossible to deliver, or have a serious detrimental effect on, the provision of an education service to the applicant and to other students

The review will be carried out by the school with parental, student and professional involvement, as appropriate.

In the event that a placement is found to be unsuitable the school will liaise with the appropriate agencies in an effort to obtain a more suitable placement.

In the event that there are two or more students tied for a place or places in any of the selection criteria categories above (the number of applicants exceeds the number of remaining places), the following arrangements will apply:

In the event of the School being oversubscribed and where there are a number of applicants sharing the same total score at the cut-off point, the names of those applicants will be placed in a drum and the available number of places will be allocated by lottery. This process will be overseen by an independent witness.

A utility bill will be required as proof of address and the Eircode of this address will be binding.

Siblings:

Where more than one sibling from a family applies for admission into First Year and one sibling is offered a place, the other sibling/s will automatically be offered the next available place/s provided, that by doing so, we do not exceed our maximum number of available places. A sibling is understood as a child having one or both parents in common, or who ordinarily co-resides with and is cared for by the parent / guardian making the application.

7. What will not be considered or taken into account

In accordance with section 62(7) (e) of the Education Act, the school will not consider or take into account any of the following in deciding on applications for admission or when placing a student on a waiting list for admission to the school:

- (a) a student's prior attendance at a pre-school or pre-school service.
- (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 the 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;
- (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 admission notice of the school for the school year concerned.

This is also subject to the school making offers based on existing waiting lists (up until 31st January 2025 only).

8. Decisions on applications

All decisions on applications for admission to Balla Secondary School will be based on the following:

- Our school's admission policy
- The school's annual admission notice (where applicable)
- The information provided by the applicant in the school's official application form received during the period specified in our annual admission notice for receiving applications

(Please see [section 14](#) below in relation to applications received outside of the admissions period and [section 15](#) below in relation to applications for places in years other than the intake group.)

Selection criteria that are not included in our school admission policy will not be used to make a decision on an application for a place in our school.

9. Notifying applicants of decisions

Applicants will be informed in writing as to the decision of the school, within the timeline outlined in the annual admissions notice.

If a student is not offered a place in our school, the reasons why they were not offered a place will be communicated in writing to the applicant, including, where applicable, details of the student's ranking against the selection criteria and details of the student's place on the waiting list for the school year concerned.

Applicants will be informed of the right to seek a review/right of appeal of the school's decision (see [section 18](#) below for further details).

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

In accepting an offer of admission from Balla Secondary 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 awaiting confirmation of an offer of admission from another school or schools, and if so, you must provide details of the other school or schools concerned.

Applicants should be aware that failure to disclose this information on the acceptance of a place may lead to an offer being withdrawn by the school.

11. Circumstances in which offers may not be made or may be withdrawn

An offer of admission may not be made or may be withdrawn by Balla Secondary 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 [section 10](#) above.

The board of management has a duty of care to ensure as far as practicable the health and safety of the students and staff of the school. In addition, the board of management is required under section 15(1) of the Education Act 1998 to provide, or cause to be provided, an appropriate education for each student at the school for which that board has responsibility.

An application for admission may be refused, therefore, where the admission of the applicant would pose a significant risk to the health and safety of the applicant or students and staff of the school, or risk significantly interfering with the right of other students to an appropriate education.

12. Sharing of Data with other schools

Applicants should be aware that section 66(6) of the Education (Admission to Schools) Act 2018 allows for the sharing of data between schools in order to facilitate the efficient admission of students. Section 66(6) allows a school to provide a patron or another board of management with a list of the students in relation to whom—

- (i) an application for admission to the school has been received,
- (ii) an offer of admission to the school has been made, or
- (iii) an offer of admission to the school has been accepted.

The list may include any or all of the following:

- (i) the date on which an application for admission was received by the school;
- (ii) the date on which an offer of admission was made by the school;
- (iii) the date on which an offer of admission was accepted by an applicant;
- (iv) a student's personal details including his or her name, address, date of birth and personal public service number (within the meaning of section 262 of the Social Welfare Consolidation Act 2005).

13. Waiting list in the event of oversubscription

In the event of there being more applications to the school year concerned than places available, a waiting list of students whose applications for admission to Balla Secondary 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 Balla Secondary 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.

14. Late Applications

All applications for admission received after the closing date as outlined in the annual admission notice will be considered and decided upon in accordance with our school's admissions policy, the Education Admissions to School Act 2018 and any regulations made under that Act.

Late applicants will be notified of the decision in respect of their application not later than three weeks after the date on which the school received the application. Late applicants will be offered a place if there is a place available. In the event that there is no place available, the name of the applicant will be added to the waiting list.

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

The procedures of the school in relation to the admission of students who are not already admitted to the school to classes or years other than the school's intake group are as follows:

- a. The Application is in compliance with the School's Admission Policy
- b. The Applicant meets the criteria laid down by the Department of Education & Skills.
- c. That the Department of Education and Science approves the transfer
- d. All students entering the school must supply a Birth Certificate or other appropriate identification
- e. There is a place available in the year group into which the student wishes to transfer
- f. The school can accommodate the subject choices of the student
- g. Interview with the student and parents/guardians to establish the following:
 - (i) reasons for the transfer
 - (ii) advisability of the transfer
 - (iii) consequences of the transfer
- h. All relevant information from the school the student is/was attending. The parents shall be requested to have a Transfer Form completed by the student's present/former school indicating the following:
 - (i) attendance
 - (ii) educational progress
 - (iii) disabilities
 - (iv) special needs
 - (v) any other relevant information
- i. Where appropriate contact shall be made with the Educational Welfare Officer
- j. In the interests of the student applying and in the interests of the existing school community it is of the utmost importance that the applicant will not have an adverse effect in terms of the health, safety and /or welfare of students or staff of the School. An applicant will not be accepted if it is deemed that he/she is likely to have an adverse impact on any member of the school community. This is not intended to discriminate against anyone on the grounds of social class or academic ability.

The procedures of the school in relation to the admission of students who are not already admitted to the school, after the commencement of the school year in which admission is sought, are as follows:

- a. The Application is in compliance with the School's Admission Policy
- b. The Applicant meets the criteria laid down by the Department of Education & Skills.
- c. That the Department of Education and Science approves the admission
- d. All students entering the school must supply a Birth Certificate or other appropriate identification
- e. There is a place available in the year group into which the student wishes to transfer
- f. The school can accommodate the subject choices of the student
- g. Interview with the student and parents/guardians to establish the following:
 - (i) reasons for the transfer
 - (ii) advisability of the transfer
 - (iii) consequences of the transfer

- h. All relevant information from the school the student is/was attending. The parents shall be requested to have a Transfer Form completed by the student's present/former school indicating the following:
- (i) attendance
 - (ii) educational progress
 - (iii) disabilities
 - (iv) special needs
 - (v) any other relevant information
- i. Where appropriate contact shall be made with the Educational Welfare Officer
- j. In the interests of the student applying and in the interests of the existing school community it is of the utmost importance that the applicant will not have an adverse effect in terms of the health, safety and / or welfare of students or staff of the School. An applicant will not be accepted if it is deemed that he/she is likely to have an adverse impact on any member of the school community. This is not intended to discriminate against anyone on the grounds of social class or academic ability.

The board of management has a duty of care to ensure as far as practicable the health and safety of the students and staff of the school. In addition, the board of management is required under section 15(1) of the Education Act 1998 to provide, or cause to be provided, an appropriate education for each student at the school for which that board has responsibility.

An application for admission may be refused, therefore, where the admission of the applicant would pose a significant risk to the health and safety of the applicant or students and staff of the school, or risk significantly interfering with the right of other students to an appropriate education.

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

The board of Balla Secondary School or any persons acting on its behalf shall not, except in accordance with section 64 of the Education (Admission to Schools) Act 2018, charge fees for or seek payment or contributions (howsoever described) as a condition of-

- (a) an application for admission of a student to the school, or
- (b) the admission or continued enrolment of a student in the school.

17. Arrangements regarding students not attending religious instruction

A parent of a student, or a student who has reached the age of 18, who wishes to attend Balla Secondary School without attending religious instruction should make a written request to the Principal. A meeting will be then be arranged with the parent(s) or the student, as the case may be, to discuss how the request may be accommodated by the school.

18. Reviews/appeals

Review of decisions by the board of Management

The parent of the student, or in the case of a student who has reached the age of 18 years, the student, may request the board to review a decision to refuse admission. Such requests must be made in accordance with Section 29C of the Education Act 1998.

The timeline within which such a review must be requested and the other requirements applicable to such reviews are set out in the procedures determined by the Minister under

section 29B of the Education Act 1998 which are published on the website of the Department of Education and Skills.

The board will conduct such reviews in accordance with the requirements of the procedures determined under Section 29B and with section 29C of the Education Act 1998.

Note: Where an applicant has been refused admission due to the school being oversubscribed, the applicant **must request a review** of that decision by the board of management prior to making an appeal under section 29 of the Education Act 1998.

Where an applicant has been refused admission due to a reason other than the school being oversubscribed, the applicant **may request a review** of that decision by the board of management prior to making an appeal under section 29 of the Education Act 1998.

Right of appeal

Under Section 29 of the Education Act 1998, the parent of the student, or in the case of a student who has reached the age of 18 years, the student, may appeal a decision of this school to refuse admission.

An appeal may be made under Section 29 (1)(c)(i) of the Education Act 1998 where the refusal to admit was due to the school being oversubscribed.

An appeal may be made under Section 29 (1)(c)(ii) of the Education Act 1998 where the refusal to admit was due a reason other than the school being oversubscribed.

Where an applicant has been refused admission due to the school being oversubscribed, the applicant **must request a review** of that decision by the board of management **prior to making an appeal** under section 29 of the Education Act 1998. (see Review of decisions by the Board of Management)

Where an applicant has been refused admission due to a reason other than the school being oversubscribed, the applicant **may request a review** of that decision by the board of management prior to making an appeal under section 29 of the Education Act 1998. (see Review of decisions by the Board of Management)

Appeals under Section 29 of the Education Act 1998 will be considered and determined by an independent appeals committee appointed by the Minister for Education and Skills.

The timeline within which such an appeal must be made and the other requirements applicable to such appeals are set out in the procedures determined by the Minister under section 29B of the Education Act 1998 which are published on the website of the Department of Education and Skills.