

MATER DEI ACADEMY
An Independent Catholic Classical School

ADMISSIONS POLICY



Admissions Policy

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Version	1.2
Date	August 21, 2020

1 Introduction

MATER DEI ACADEMY is an independent Catholic classical school in Cork, Ireland. Mater Dei Academy is supported by a combination of donations, voluntary contributions and philanthropy. The Academy is an independent and private education institution.

The Irish Constitution acknowledges the role of a parent or guardian as the primary educator of the child and has enshrined in law that a parent or guardian may home educate a child. Mater Dei Academy is a non-recognised school under Section 14 (1) of the Education (Welfare) Act, 2000¹ which enables parents or guardians to independently choose an education for their child in a school which is not funded by the Department of Educational and Skills

The Board of Management of Mater Dei Academy hereby sets out its Enrolment Policy. The Board trusts that, by so doing, parents/guardians are suitably informed in relation to enrolment matters. This Policy may be amended and updated from time to time by the Board of Management of the Academy.

2 Ethos and Identity of Mater Dei Academy

The Academy's mission and teaching philosophy are guided by the Catholic Church's Declaration on Christian Education, *Gravissimum Educationis*, which sets out the fundamental principles of a comprehensive, religiously-informed, education:

"The Church is bound as a mother to give to these children of hers an education by which their whole life can be imbued with the spirit of Christ and at the same time do all she can to promote the complete perfection of the human person, the good of earthly society and the building of a world that is more human."²

The Academy fully supports the principles of:

- (a) inclusiveness (in particular, in relation to the enrolment of children with a disability or other special educational needs);
- (b) parental choice subject to equality of access and participation in an independent Catholic classical school;
- (c) respect for the values, traditions, diversity and ways of life that support the complete perfection of the human person, in accordance with the Catholic ethos of the academy; the good of earthly society and the building of a world that is more human;
- (d) equality of opportunity for all students.

3 Curriculum

Mater Dei Academy provides a comprehensive six-year programme in the classical tradition, culminating in the Irish Leaving Certificate examination which students sit as independent candidates in S.E.C. approved examination centres.

¹ <https://www.tusla.ie/services/educational-welfare-services/information-for-parents-and-guardians/home-education-and-attending-non-recognised-schools/>

² http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decl_19651028_gravissimum-educationis_en.html

The Junior Cycle

The Academy provides a comprehensive four-year junior cycle in the classical tradition which has the ambition of leading the student to the ultimate Truth, which is God. This will be achieved through a combination of study in the humanities (literature, language, history, philosophy, and theology), mathematics, science and music. All subjects in the Junior Cycle are compulsory for all students.

Language and Literature

Our study of Irish and English literature is tied to the study of history and the rest of the humanities. Students are introduced to classical and early English classics and modern literary renderings of historical texts. Irish literature is introduced through the rich tradition of rhyme and song. Moving towards the modern period, students read Ó Siochfhradha, Shakespeare, Dickens, Twain, Sayers and Lewis. Reading and writing go hand in hand, and each student masters the art of writing in the Irish and English language.

History

The four-year history sequence covers ancient history through ancient civilizations, early Church history, the Middle Ages, the Renaissance, and the Reformation and Counter-Reformation. In year IV, students study the modern era, including the French and Irish Revolutions, the Industrial Revolution, World Wars I and II, Communism and Modernism. History provides a context and background to the entire humanities curriculum.

Philosophy

Philosophy is the thread connecting history, mathematics, logic and language. The course is critical in developing the student's abilities to reason, analyse and discuss ideas through thoughtful discourse. The course follows the development of philosophy from its classical roots focusing on Plato and Aristotle, the great philosophers of the Catholic tradition such as St. Thomas Aquinas, and the encounter between philosophy and the modern world in areas such as economics, ethics and technology.

Theology

Theology, "the study of God," is the context by which all other texts are studied. Students are introduced to God's nature and action through the biblical personalities of the Old and New Testaments, the lives of the saints, as well as a rigorous grounding in the catechism of the Catholic Church.

Foreign Language

The study of a third language is required of all students. Students will choose from French and Latin.

Mathematics

Mathematics has been described as the language of God. The fundamental four-year programme will cover algebra, geometry, trigonometry and calculus, enabling the student to enter into the senior cycle with an exemplary foundation in mathematical reasoning and logic.

Sciences

Unlike many modern science curricula, the four-year science programme has a logical progression from earth and planetary science (Year I) through to God's creation in biology (Year II) and chemistry (Year III), culminating in an introduction to the nature and properties of God's matter in physics (Year IV).

Music

Music is an expression of the joy in Christianity and music is a fundamental part of the Irish Catholic tradition. All students will study music. Music theory includes performance, ear training, note reading, and musical analysis. Music history is taught through the context of the Irish and Church traditions in which the students are immersed.

Choir

All students will have the opportunity to participate in choir. The school choir is an important role in the life of the school and will perform regularly at school liturgies and in public recitals.

Art

A complete education includes the development of the creative nature. Mater Dei Academy seeks to provide all students with the tools and the technique with which to express their ideas, their feelings and their love in Art. It must also include the analytical skills with which to judge a work of art and exposure to great art in the proper context of eternal Truth.

Physical Education

The complete human person is composed of body, mind and soul. Mater Dei Academy seeks to nurture and support the physical, intellectual and spiritual education of each of its students. Physical education plays an important role in this nurturing, as well as the fostering positive values of leadership, modesty, generosity, charity and understanding.

Junior Cycle Assessment

The junior cycle will culminate in internationally accredited examination (e.g., Cambridge IGCSE and Teastas Eorpach na Gaeilge) to assess core competencies across language & literature, mathematics & science and music.

The Senior Cycle

Building on a strong classical foundation, the school will deliver a two-year senior cycle culminating in the Leaving Certificate examination. The programme will continue in the classical tradition with an emphasis on questioning and understanding in preference to examination training.

Students will take core examination subjects at Leaving Certificate in English, Irish and mathematics. Remaining examination subjects will be student-specific where the school will exploit flexible learning options, peer support and distance learning to enable each student to study subjects most suited to their aptitudes and interests.

4 Religious Identity of the Academy

The Academy is an independent Catholic secondary school.

All admitted students will be expected to be baptised and confirmed in the Catholic faith and practising Catholics³, and will be actively supported in this mission by their parents and guardians.

All admitted students will demonstrate a commitment to uphold the ethos and religious identity of the Academy through active participation and living of the faith in all of the Academy's teaching and learning activities.

Religious education and formation are at the core of the classical education for all year groups and is an integral part of the ethos of the Academy. It is, therefore, a requirement of the Academy that students attend religious education classes in theology and philosophy in the Catholic tradition. Students are also expected to attend liturgical celebrations, daily prayer and retreats.

5 Co-educational Academy

Mater Dei Academy welcomes both boys and girls to its six-year programme.

6 Voluntary Contributions

Mater Dei Academy is not a fee-paying school. Instead, all parents are asked to provide a defined voluntary time commitment to support the Academy's activities. Optional voluntary financial contributions from parents and guardians form an important support for the running of the Academy. However, such contributions are optional and no child is refused admission to Mater Dei Academy on financial grounds. Parents and guardians will be informed concerning volunteering and optional voluntary contributions and other expenses at the Academy's annual Open Evening as part of the ordinary enrolment application process.

7 Enrolment Procedures for Entry into First Year

7.1 General Criteria for Application for Enrolment

The general criteria for application for enrolment include that the student:

- (i) has, or will have, reached 12 years of age on the 1st January in the Calendar year following the child's entry into First Year;
- (ii) has completed Sixth class in primary school (students who have been home-schooled or students from other countries must have reached a comparable standard of education);
- (iii) accepts and embraces and undertakes to follow the school ethos and religious identity;

³ In this context, practising Catholics refers to adherence to the Precepts of the Church as detailed in articles 2041-2043 of the Catechism of the Catholic Church:

https://www.vatican.va/archive/ccc_css/archive/catechism/p3s1c3a3.htm

(iv) accepts, if offered a place in the Academy, to confirm in writing that he or she accepts the Academy's Code of Behaviour/Discipline and relevant school policies.

Furthermore, if the student is offered a place in the Academy, his or her parents/guardians must confirm in writing that they accept the Academy's Ethos, Code of Behaviour/Discipline and relevant school policies and that they shall comply with legislation which permits for the transfer of information from primary schools.

7.2 Students with Special Education Needs

Mater Dei Academy seeks to provide authentic Catholic formation in the context of academic excellence. The Academy welcomes applications from students with special educational needs unless the nature and degree of those needs is such that to enrol the student concerned would be inconsistent with either the best interests of the student concerned or the effective provision of education for the other students with whom the student concerned is to be educated.

While recognising and fully supporting parents' rights to have a school of their choice for their children, the Academy's ability to accept students with particular special needs is dependent on the availability of resources suitable to meet those needs for the individual student, being available to the Academy. As an Independent school which does not receive any financial support from the Department of Education and Skills, Mater Dei Academy may need to acknowledge that, in certain circumstances, the Board cannot guarantee the same standard of educational excellence and Faith formation to students with particular educational needs. Therefore, any offer of a place in the Academy is dependent on the ability of the Board of Management to meet the specific needs of each student.

The Board of Management must be made aware of any special needs as early as possible, so that these needs can be assessed and addressed where possible. Parents are requested to outline the details of a child's special educational needs on the Registration Form.

The Academy, having gathered all relevant information and professional documentation, shall assess if and how the needs of these students can be met by the Academy.

7.3 Applications

Application for enrolment is by way of written application on the Academy's enrolment application form. Details are available on the Academy's website;
<http://www.materdeiacademy.ie>

It is important that all of the necessary details, documents, etc. sought are stated clearly on, and submitted with, the application form. Parents may submit information in addition to that required by the Academy's enrolment application form.

A non-refundable administration charge of €250 must accompany each enrolment application. In the absence of such charge, an enrolment application will not be accepted. Notwithstanding the foregoing, the Board of Management reserves the right to waive the enrolment application charge in respect of enrolment applications.

7.4 Time frame for Application

Written application on the Academy's enrolment application form for enrolment to the Academy should reach the Academy by the specified date in the year before the child should start secondary school.

This information will be published annually on the Academy website, normally by the first day of September of each year.

No priority is given to those who apply earlier than others (in other words, a 'first – come /first served' policy does not apply to enrolment applications).

Interview Process

The Board of Management reserves the right to meet all applicants and/or their parents / guardians to clarify the education needs of the child or the applicant's commitment to the ethos and identity of the Academy.

Open Evening

The parents / guardians of all applicants are invited to an open information evening in the Academy prior to enrolment.

At this event, the ethos and identity of the Academy is described in detail and all relevant enrolment information is made available to parents. In advance of this seminar, parents / guardians have the opportunity to submit questions relating to the Academy and in relation to enrolment. In addition, after the presentations, the parents / guardians have the opportunity to meet the various speakers.

Enrolment application

The date of the information evening will be published on the Academy website by the 1st of September each year.

The completed application forms must normally be returned to the Secretary of the Board of Management, by the Friday following the open evening.

Application forms from applicants claiming priority allocations (see **Selection Process below**) must submit their application form by the second Friday in September, in the year preceding their entry to the Academy.

All applications claiming priority rights received after this date will be treated as an application with no entitlements or claim to a place in the academy, and will be placed treated in the same way as ordinary applications received by the Friday following the open evening.

Application forms returned after Friday following the open evening will not be considered.

If you have not received an acknowledgement within one week, it is the responsibility of the applicant to draw this to the attention of the Secretary of the Board of Management.

Offers of places

All applications will be responded to and offers of places made, in writing, on or before 1st of October prior to the academic year in which your child is due to commence post-primary education.

8 Selection Process

The Board of Management shall determine the maximum number of First Year places to be offered each year. Having regard to the Catholic identity of the Academy and without prejudice to the following, the Board of Management reserves the right to offer a place to a boy(s) or girl(s) irrespective of their family's financial circumstances.

The decision to award any place at the Academy will be based on an objective assessment by the Board of Management.

Parents / guardians should note that –

- (a) There is no automatic right of enrolment in the Academy for any applicant and the Academy allocates places in accordance with this policy and relevant legislation in relation to all applications.
- (b) When the number of enrolment applications exceeds the number of places available, places will be offered in the order of priority set out as follows;

First allocation of places

Brothers or sisters of current Academy students; brothers or sisters of past pupils of the Academy.

Allocation of remaining places

When all of the above priority categories have been dealt with, the remaining applications are allocated. Each applicant is assessed by the Board on an individual basis in light of the student's suitability and commitment to upholding the ethos and identity of the Academy.

Waiting List

Applicants who have not been offered a place under the foregoing criteria will be placed on a waiting list.

The waiting list remains in operation only until 31st August immediately following the creation of that waiting list.

Should places become available these will be offered in order of place on the waiting list (i.e. No. 1, No. 2, No. 3.....and so on)

9 Confirmation of Acceptance of Offer of Enrolment

Applicants who are being offered places will be invited, within 7 days, to;

- (a) confirm, in writing, acceptance or otherwise of the posting of the offer; and

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(b) submit the completed registration form (available on the Academy's website) in which the following should be stated:

- (i) religion – it is the expectation of the Board of Management that the child is a practising Catholic, is confirmed and is fully supported by his parents / guardians in his or her Faith formation;
- (ii) medical - details of any medical condition which the Academy should be aware of should be stated clearly;
- (iii) family circumstances – All relevant information concerning family circumstances should be clearly stated and made available to the Academy.

(c) The following should accompany the Registration form;

- (i) Signed confirmations that the applicant and his parents/guardians agree to respect the ethos and identity of the school and adhere to the Academy's Code of Behaviour, school policies and shall comply with legislation which permits for the transfer of information from primary schools.
- (ii) a non-refundable administration charge of €250. If the administration charge is not paid, a place cannot be held and will be offered to the next applicant on the waiting list.

Parents and Guardians agree that if they are withdrawing a pupil, three months' notice of withdrawal must be given in writing to the Academy or else a third of a year's nominal voluntary contribution, in lieu of notice, shall be payable to the Academy.

- (iii) A copy of previously undertaken psychological and/or medical assessments/reports, as appropriate, should accompany the Registration Form.

As regards individuals with specific disability or special needs, the parent(s) / guardian(s) may be requested to provide other information (including, where necessary, from professional assessment) to assist the Academy in establishing the educational and training needs of their son and to profile the support services required to enable Management assess how best the Academy could meet his or her needs. In such cases, the Academy will meet with the parents to discuss the child's needs.

Failure to comply with any aspect of the above will result in the enrolment offer being withdrawn.

(d) Parents / guardians of applicants who have accepted places will be invited to a meeting before the end of that school year the purpose of which is to provide all relevant information regarding their son's induction into First Year.

10 Assessment

Boys and girls who have accepted a place in Mater Dei Academy may be requested to sit common assessments (usually in February/March prior to commencing First Year) to assess student abilities and aptitudes.

11 Induction

All First Year entrants are (unless exceptional circumstances so prevent) expected to attend an Induction Programme at the commencement of the academic year.

12 Enrolment Application Procedures for Entry other than First Year

The Board of Management will consider applications for enrolment into the Academy into a year group other than First Year, providing there is a vacancy in the relevant year, class and subject groups. Entrance to Sixth Year is generally not considered to be in the best interests of the applicant.

The Registration Form and a letter for reference from previous school, necessary for entry into the Academy must be accompanied by:

- (a) details of previous secondary school(s) attended;
- (b) the reason(s) for leaving that (those) school(s);
- (c) copies of all the students' records from that (those) school(s).

The Board of Management will decide on applications for admission other than for First Year by applying the following criteria:

- (a) the Board of Management must be satisfied that it can discharge its duty to provide an appropriate and authentic Catholic education for every student.
- (b) There shall, in the Board of Management's sole opinion, be a minimal disruption to existing students.
- (c) there is a vacancy within the Academy in the relevant year group, class and subject groups in respect of which entry is sought.
- (d) the application is in line with the Academy's Admission's Policy;
- (e) that the transfer to the Academy is, on the recommendation of the principal is
(i) in the best interest of the student; (ii) of educational benefit to the student;
and (iii) in the best interest of the Academy.

To assist in their decision as regards such criteria, the Board of Management may seek the permission of the applicant's parents / guardians or the applicant (if over 18 years of age) to consult with the management of former schools attended by the applicant and / or consult with the relevant Educational Welfare Officer or relevant State agency, as appropriate.

13 Right of Appeal

Parents/guardians of a student whose application for enrolment has been refused may make an appeal to the Board of Management. The Board will endeavour to hear appeals which have been received in writing to The Secretary of the Board of Management, within 14 days of the date of the letter notifying refusal to enrol. The Board of Management will determine the appeal in accordance with the Enrolment Policy.

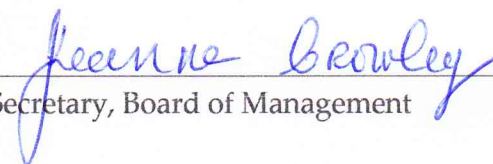
At the request of the parent / guardian, the Board of Management may appoint an independent arbitrator to make a final and binding adjudication of such an appeal whose decision will be binding on all parties. Any expenses or costs incurred as part of this process will be borne by the appealing parents / guardians.

Parents and guardians should note that as an independent and non-recognised school under Section 14 (1) of the Education (Welfare) Act, 2000, Section 29 of the Education Act 1998 does not apply.

14 Adoption by the Board

This document represents the Mater Dei Academy's Admission Policy. This policy was adopted by the Board of Management of Mater Dei Academy on the date below.

Signed:  Date: 21/08/2020
Chair, Board of Management

Signed:  Date: 29th August 2020
Secretary, Board of Management