



St. Mary's Secondary School, Mallow

# Policy on Subject Options

## Review dates

Staff	May 2017	
Parents	May 2017	
Student Council	April 2017	
Board of Management	November 2017	Ratified 9-11-2017

Due for next review \_\_\_\_\_

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## **1 How our Policy was developed**

This policy outlines the rationale and procedure for students' option subject choices at Junior and Senior Cycle. Denise O'Driscoll is the post holder with responsibility for collating option subject choices in 2<sup>nd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Year. The Policy on Subject Options was initially devised by a core group of staff, comprising of guidance counsellors, option subjects post holder, option teachers and senior management. This policy was further developed through a series of consultative meetings with the Education partners: Board of Studies, Staff, Student Council and Parents Association. The Policy on Subject Options aims to provide clear and transparent guidelines on subject option choices within the parameters of the Education Act 1998, the Education Welfare Act 2000, the Equal Status Act 2000, Education (Admissions to School) Bill 2016, the Ceist Charter and the Mission Statement of St. Marys Secondary School, Mallow. We aim to provide a broad and balanced curriculum to afford students' opportunities to achieve success in accordance with their talents, aptitudes and interests.

## **2 Our Vision**

As a Ceist School St Mary's Secondary School *"is a faith community that is characterised by the quality of its personal relationships. A caring, welcoming school promotes a culture of good relationships where people thrive and grow. Relationships within the school aim to promote quality teaching and learning in an ordered and safe environment, where discipline, responsibility and accountability are achieved"*. We strive to build community with all the partners in education by fostering positive relationships with each other, maintaining professional standards, and by nurturing each student reach her full potential.

## **3 The School Mission Statement**

St. Mary's Secondary School, Mallow is a voluntary Catholic secondary school for girls only under the trusteeship of CEIST. In co-operation with the Department of Education, with parental and community support and within the available resources our mission is:

- To develop a community of learning which is geared towards the holistic development of each student;
- To foster the pursuit of academic excellence, respecting the specific potential and talents of each student;
- To promote within the school community the values of a Christian, caring society;

- To value, within the total school community, self-respect, respect for others and for the environment;
- To recognise and affirm the unique value and contribution of each individual.

#### 4 **Rationale**

Option subject selection is an important process and students and parents are asked to give careful consideration to the subject choices they will make. St Mary's Secondary School will make every effort to facilitate subject choice in accordance with student preferences as indicated on their 'Option Choices Form' (see Appendix for school option forms). This however is influenced by the following factors:

1. The allocation of resources from Department of Education & Skills.
2. The school's ability to offer a subject in a given year
3. The availability of teaching staff qualified to teach a particular subject
4. The demand for a subject relative to the cohort in a given year.

**Every effort is made to meet the preferences of students and there are support structures in place to ensure that students make informed choices. The process of subject choice, banding and timetabling is a very rigorous and time consuming, thus there is limited scope for change of subjects after submission of 'Option Choices Forms'. Only in exceptional circumstances will changes be accommodated up until the deadline set of September 30<sup>th</sup> in 2<sup>nd</sup> or 5<sup>th</sup> Year. Students must attend class and fully participate in all of their chosen timetabled subjects throughout the entirety of the Junior or Leaving Certificate cycle.**

#### 5 **Junior Cycle Option Subject Choices Support Structures & Selection Procedures**

##### Curriculum Provision

In 1<sup>st</sup> Year, all students study the full suite of 7 option subjects: French, German, Science, Business, Home Economics, Art and Music in addition to core subjects: Irish, English, Maths, Religion, CSPE, History and Geography. The rationale behind the provision of tasters across all options is to empower students' to make informed option choices for Junior Cycle in accordance with their interests, aptitudes and ability levels. As the new Junior Cycle of

Achievement (JCPA) is phased in from 2014-2022, curriculum provision will be altered to fully comply with DES Curriculars.

#### Support Structures for Students

There is a dedicated Options Week in March, whereby all option teachers make presentations to 1<sup>st</sup> year students on the Junior Cycle course components for their respective subject area and an Options Information Talk is scheduled for all 1<sup>st</sup> Year students. Students can also avail of individual guidance appointments to support option choices for junior cycle.

#### Support Structures for Parents

Prior to choosing 4 option subjects for 2<sup>nd</sup> year, the selection process is further supported through a Parents Options Information Talk by the Principal, Deputy Principal and Guidance Counsellor, feedback from exam reports/class tests and feedback from teachers at the 1<sup>st</sup> Year Parent Teacher Meeting.

#### Procedure for Selecting Junior Cycle Option Choices

- Students select 4 option subjects for 2<sup>nd</sup> year, from the suite of option subjects taken in 1<sup>st</sup> year.
- Students complete the '2<sup>nd</sup> Year Option Subject Choices Form' (see appendix).
- The final day for return of Second Year options form in March is specified on the form. Parents are required to counter-sign this form.
- Upon receipt of forms option bands are created solely based on student preferences and timetabling will commence in April.
- The process of subject choice, banding and timetabling is a very rigorous and time consuming and thus there is limited scope for change of subjects after submission of 'Option Choices Forms'.
- Only in exceptional circumstances will changes be accommodated up until a deadline set of September 30<sup>th</sup> in 2<sup>nd</sup> or 5<sup>th</sup> Year.

## 6 Senior Cycle Option Subject Choices Support Structures & Selection Procedures

### Curriculum Provision

Incoming 5<sup>th</sup> years select 4 option subjects from the following suite of 13 option subjects; French, German, Accounting, Business, Economics, Biology, Chemistry, Physics, History, Geography, Home Economics, Music and Art. Senior cycle students study a total of 4 option subjects and core subjects Irish, English, Maths, Religion and PE for Senior Cycle.

### Support Structures for Students

There are many support structures in place to ensure students make informed decisions on their option choices for senior cycle. A 5<sup>th</sup> Year Subject Choice Options Day is scheduled annually for TYs and 3<sup>rd</sup> years progressing directly into 5<sup>th</sup> year. This consists of Subject Choice Options presentations by all subject teachers and is followed by question and answer sessions. TY students are timetabled for guidance once a week, which also supports option choices and subject requirements for third level courses. Students can also avail of individual guidance appointments to support option choices for senior cycle.

### Support Structures for Parents

A Parent Information Evening on 5<sup>th</sup> Year Options Subjects, consisting of presentations by the Guidance Counsellor and Principal further supports the selection process and provides an opportunity to address parental questions. We encourage all parents to attend this very important presentation.

### Guidelines for Making Option Choices

- When choosing Leaving Cert subjects great care must be taken as the choice of subjects made now may determine 3<sup>rd</sup> level and career options after school
- Be aware of minimum entry requirements and specific course requirements for 3<sup>rd</sup> level courses
- Identify the subjects you like—it is easier to work on something you enjoy
- Note subjects you are good at
- Ask your subject teachers for advice
- If uncertain about your future career, choose a balance of subjects to keep options open
- Talk about options to your parents, guidance counsellor, and Leaving Certificate students (remember that individuals have different competencies for different areas of study).
- Research online careers websites.

The process of making option subject choices is summarised as follows:



### Procedure for Selecting Senior Cycle Option Choices

- Students select 4 option subjects for 5<sup>th</sup> year, from the suite of option subjects offered.
- Students complete the ‘5<sup>th</sup> Year Option Subject Choices Form’ (see appendix).
- The final day for return of the 5<sup>th</sup> Year options form in March is specified on the form. Parents are required to counter-sign this form.
- Upon receipt of forms option bands are created solely based on student preferences and timetabling will commence in April.
- The process of subject choice, banding and timetabling is a very rigorous and time consuming and there is limited scope for change of subjects after submission of the ‘5<sup>th</sup> Year Option Subject Choices Form’.
- Only in exceptional circumstances will changes be accommodated up until a deadline set of September 30<sup>th</sup> in 2<sup>nd</sup> or 5<sup>th</sup> Year.
- Students must attend class and participate in all of their chosen subjects throughout the entirety of the Leaving Certificate cycle.

## 7 **Subject Change in Exceptional Circumstances**

There is limited scope for changing subjects after the submission of the Option Subject Choices Forms. Only in exceptional circumstances will option changes be considered on or before the deadline of September 30<sup>th</sup> annually.

- ‘Change of Mind Applications’ must be made to the Principal in writing.
- A completed ‘Change of Mind Application’ form must be submitted on or before September 30<sup>th</sup> in 2<sup>nd</sup> or 5<sup>th</sup> Year only.
- ‘Change of Mind Applications’ will not be considered after this deadline.
- Subject changes will not be accommodated in 3<sup>rd</sup> or 6<sup>th</sup> Year.
- A meeting with the guidance counsellor is required.
- A meeting with parents and student is required.

The Principal will communicate her decision to the student and parents as soon as possible after receipt of application and the required meetings have taken place. ‘Change of Mind Applications’ will not be considered after September 30<sup>th</sup> in 2<sup>nd</sup> or 5<sup>th</sup> Year.

Note: Section 28 of the Education Act allows for the Appeal of the Principal’s decision to the Board of Management.

## 8 **Additional Subjects and the Expectations to Study the Full Leaving Certificate Curriculum**

- Studying additional subjects outside of the school curriculum is the sole responsibility of students and their parents. Students may register for additional subjects on their SEC Examination Forms. The completion of project/coursework is the responsibility of students and SEC official submission and signing of SEC forms will be accommodated by the Deputy Principal. However, any decisions to study additional subjects should not adversely impact on the studied school curriculum and are not deemed as exceptional circumstances for subject change.
- We are contracted by the Department of Education and Skills to provide each student with 28 hours of tuition or 42 class periods per week. Students must attend class and fully participate in all of their chosen timetabled subjects throughout the entirety of the Junior or Leaving Certificate cycle.
- The following expectations to study the full Leaving Certificate school curriculum apply:
- All students are required to take the core subjects for Leaving Certificate:

**English**

**Maths**

**Irish**

\*\*Unless they have an exemption granted for Irish.

- All students must also take 4 optional subjects for the Leaving Cert from the list provided and in accordance with preferences stated on their '5<sup>th</sup> Year Option Subject Choices Form'.
- Students are required to continue studying these subjects for Leaving Cert and are expected to fully engage in coursework and complete homework for all of their selected subjects.
- Students cannot opt out on the basis of studying an additional subject outside of school.
- Students cannot opt out just because they wish to do 6 subjects.

\*\*Students with specific learning difficulties may on the advice of the Special Needs Department and in consultation with parents / guardians, the pastoral team and the Principal be granted a reduced curriculum. If a student is granted a subject exemption by the DES, this will be fully accommodated.



## 5<sup>th</sup> Year Option Subject Choices Form

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Class: \_\_\_\_\_

You are asked to indicate your choice of option subjects **in order of preference** from **1 to 5** from the following list:

French, German, Economics, Business, Accountancy, Geography, History, Home Economics (Social & Scientific), Music, Art, Biology, Chemistry, Physics. The 1<sup>st</sup> option is a language.

1. Language Block- Please tick one box  
French  German  Exempt
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

Please be reminded that this is an initial consultation with students and it may not be possible to accommodate all students' requirements. Subjects will be offered subject to demand and allocation of resources from Department of Education & Skills.

I agree to actively participate and fully commit to completing the subjects listed above in St Mary's Secondary School.

Student's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Please return this form by **Monday, 27<sup>th</sup> March, 2017.**



## 2<sup>nd</sup> Year Option Subject Choices Form

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Class: \_\_\_\_\_

**In St. Mary's students study the following core subjects for the Junior Cycle in 2017-2018: Irish, English, Maths, Religion, History, Geography, P.E. & C.S.P.E. In addition they study four option subjects including a language. Please select option subjects below in order of choice 1 – 5, a language being your 1<sup>st</sup> choice.**

OPTIONS	Order of choice (1-5)
FRENCH	
GERMAN	
HOME ECONOMICS	
SCIENCE	
BUSINESS STUDIES	
MUSIC	
ART	
LEARNING SUPPORT	

**Subjects are available subject to demand and allocation of teaching resources from the Department of Education & Skills**

Student's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Class: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent's/Guardian's Signature \_\_\_\_\_

**PLEASE RETURN TO BOX IN OFFICE BY WEDNESDAY 15<sup>TH</sup> MARCH 2017**



## Subject Change of Mind Application Form

Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Class Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Home Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent / Guardian's Mobile Number: \_\_\_\_\_

List the 4 Option Subjects you have chosen.

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

4. \_\_\_\_\_

**The subject you wish to change from is:** \_\_\_\_\_

The reason you wish to change is: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

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**The subject you wish to change to is:** \_\_\_\_\_

List the Option Subjects you took for Junior Certificate:

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Student Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent / Guardian Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

**Please note that applications will not be considered after the deadline of September 30<sup>th</sup>**

**This policy was ratified by the Board of Management on  
9-11-2017**

**Chairperson's signature: \_\_\_\_\_**

**Principal's signature: \_\_\_\_\_**

**Review Date: \_\_\_\_\_**