Inclusion Policy

School Address*: Our Lady of Good Counsel School,*

Innishmore, Ballincollig, Cork. P31FH22

Phone number: *0214878370*

Roll number: *18208A*

School Patron: *The Bishop of Cork and Ross, Bishop Fintan Gavin*.

Principal: *Aisling Power*.

Deputy Principal: *Nollaig Moynihan.*

Chairperson: *Billy Murphy.*

Draft circulated to school staff on 14/10/2026 for review.

Policy ratified by the Board on:

Vision Statement

Our Lady of Good Counsel Special School (OLGC) is committed to fostering a culture of inclusion, belonging, participation and respect where every student is valued as a unique individual and enabled to participate as fully as possible in school and community life.

The school recognises that inclusion extends beyond physical presence and involves meaningful participation, engagement, contribution and a sense of belonging. OLGC promotes equitable access to educational, recreational, social, sporting and community-based opportunities so that students can

achieve their full potential and become active participants within their local communities.

Inclusion is a shared responsibility involving students, families, staff, educational partners, community organisations and external agencies.

Rationale

This policy has been developed to:

- Promote inclusive practices throughout the school community.
- Support students to participate meaningfully in school and community life.
- Reflect the values and ethos of OLGC.
- Strengthen partnerships with families, schools, community organisations and external agencies.
- Support successful educational and life transitions.
- Provide a framework for planning, implementing and reviewing inclusion initiatives.
- Promote equality, participation, accessibility and belonging for all students.

Aims

OLGC aims to:

- Foster a culture of inclusion, equity and respect.
- Enable every student to experience belonging and meaningful participation.
- Remove barriers that may prevent participation in school and community life.
- Support students to develop communication, independence, self-advocacy and social skills.
- Promote positive attitudes towards disability, diversity and inclusion.
- Support successful transitions at all stages of education and life.
- Develop and sustain partnerships that enhance student opportunities and outcomes.
- Encourage participation in educational, recreational, sporting, cultural and community activities.
- Ensure students have opportunities to build positive relationships with peers across a variety of settings.

Principles Underpinning Inclusion

OLGC believes that:

- Every student has the right to be treated with dignity and respect.
- Diversity enriches the school community.
- Inclusion benefits all members of society.
- Participation and belonging contribute significantly to wellbeing and quality of life.
- Students should have opportunities to learn and develop alongside peers in a variety of settings.
- Families are essential partners in promoting inclusion.
- Collaborative partnerships strengthen educational experiences and outcomes.
- Students should be supported to achieve their maximum independence and participation.

School Context

Our Lady of Good Counsel Special School has a long-established commitment to inclusion, participation, community engagement and collaborative practice.

The school actively promotes opportunities for students to learn, participate and develop alongside peers within the wider educational and community environment. These opportunities are facilitated through established partnerships with:

- Local primary schools
- Local post-primary schools
- Cork ETB Further Education and Training Programmes
- Munster Technological University (MTU)
- Cope Foundation
- Community organisations
- Sporting and recreational groups
- Health and support services

The school is also a participating school in the:

- NCSE Inclusion Pilot Programme
- NCSE Pilot Transitional Programme

These initiatives support innovative approaches to inclusion, participation and educational transition planning.

Key Area 1: Culture and Environment

Statements of Effective Practice

For All Students

- The school actively promotes a culture of belonging, inclusion and participation.
- Students are encouraged to participate in all aspects of school life.
- Diversity is celebrated and respected.
- Positive relationships are fostered among students, staff, families and visitors.
- The school environment is welcoming, safe and accessible.
- Student achievements and contributions are recognised and celebrated.
- Participation in community life is recognised as an important aspect of personal development.

For Some and Few Students

- Individualised supports are provided to enable participation.
- Environmental adaptations are implemented where necessary.
- Assistive technology and specialised resources are utilised to maximise participation.
- Individual barriers to participation are identified and addressed through collaborative planning.

Key Area 2: Participation and Learning

OLGC recognises that learning occurs across a variety of contexts and environments.

Students benefit from opportunities to apply skills in authentic settings and engage with peers in meaningful learning experiences.

Statements of Effective Practice

For All Students

- Students participate in collaborative learning experiences with peers from other educational settings where appropriate.
- Learning opportunities promote communication, independence, social interaction and self-advocacy.
- Community-based learning opportunities form part of students' educational experiences.
- Inclusive educational activities support confidence, belonging and participation.
- Students are encouraged to develop skills that support lifelong participation in their communities.

Inclusion and Community-Based Learning Opportunities

Students may participate in:

- Shared educational projects
- Collaborative learning programmes
- Sporting events
- Recreational activities
- Community projects
- Cultural initiatives
- Performance opportunities
- Transition programmes

These experiences support social development, communication skills, confidence, independence and community participation.

Key Area 3: Partnerships and Collaboration

Meaningful inclusion is strengthened through effective partnerships.

Educational Partnerships

OLGC has developed strong collaborative relationships with local educational providers.

Primary School Partnerships

Partnerships with local primary schools may include:

- Shared learning experiences
- Social opportunities
- Inclusive projects
- Sporting activities
- Creative arts initiatives
- Peer interaction opportunities

Post-Primary School Partnerships

Partnerships with post-primary schools may include:

- Inclusion programmes
- Curriculum-linked projects
- Social integration opportunities
- Educational visits
- Transition planning supports

Further Education and Higher Education Partnerships

Cork ETB Further Education and Training

Students participate in activities designed to:

- Promote social interaction
- Develop confidence
- Enhance communication skills
- Encourage participation in physical activity

Munster Technological University (MTU)

Partnerships with MTU provide opportunities for participation in:

- Inclusive sporting activities
- Educational projects
- Social initiatives
- Community engagement activities

The partnership also supports the development of inclusive practice among future professionals.

Community Partnerships

The school collaborates with:

- Cope Foundation
- Community sports programmes
- Local voluntary groups
- Sporting organisations
- Recreational organisations
- Cultural organisations

These partnerships support:

- Social inclusion
- Physical wellbeing
- Community participation
- Friendship development
- Lifelong engagement in community activities

Key Area 4: Transition Planning

OLGC recognises that successful transitions contribute significantly to student outcomes, confidence and participation.

Transition Supports

The school supports transitions:

- Into OLGC.
- Between classes and programmes.

- Between educational settings.
- From school to further education.
- From school to community-based services.
- Into adulthood and future pathways.

Effective Practice

- Transition planning begins early where appropriate.
- Students are actively involved in transition planning.
- Families are consulted throughout transition processes.
- Relevant agencies and educational partners collaborate to support transitions.
- Individual transition plans are developed when required.

NCSE Inclusion Pilot Programme

As a participating school in the NCSE Inclusion Pilot Programme, OLGC works collaboratively with educational partners to provide meaningful opportunities for inclusion and participation.

The programme supports:

- Shared educational experiences.
- Relationship building.
- Inclusive practice.
- Community participation.
- Mutual understanding and respect.
- Student voice and belonging.

NCSE Pilot Transitional Programme

OLGC participates in the NCSE Pilot Transitional Programme to support students during important educational transitions.

The programme promotes:

- Collaborative planning.
- Familiarisation visits.
- Information sharing.
- Family engagement.
- Individualised transition supports.
- Successful continuity of educational experiences.

Role of Parents and Guardians

Parents and guardians are valued partners in promoting inclusion.

The school will:

- Communicate regularly with families.
- Consult with parents regarding participation opportunities.
- Involve parents in transition planning.
- Encourage parental involvement in school activities.
- Listen to and respond to parental feedback.

Parents are encouraged to:

- Share information that supports their child's participation.
- Engage with school initiatives.
- Participate in planning and review processes.

Role of Staff

All staff contribute to fostering an inclusive culture.

Staff will:

- Promote participation and belonging.
- Model respectful and inclusive behaviour.
- Encourage positive peer interactions.
- Facilitate student voice.
- Collaborate with families and external agencies.
- Engage in professional learning related to inclusive practice.
- Identify and reduce barriers to participation.

Monitoring and Review

The effectiveness of this policy will be monitored through:

- Student participation levels.
- Student voice initiatives.
- Parent feedback.
- Staff feedback.
- School self-evaluation processes.
- Review of partnership programmes and initiatives.
- Transition outcomes for students.

The policy will be reviewed regularly to ensure it continues to reflect the needs of students and the evolving practice of inclusive education.

Relationship with Other Policies

This policy should be read in conjunction with:

- Wellbeing Policy
- Admissions Policy
- Code of Behaviour
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Child Safeguarding Statement
- Attendance Policy
- Special Educational Needs Procedures
- Data Protection Policy
- Health and Safety Statement

Board of Management Approval

This policy was reviewed and approved by the Board of Management of Our Lady of Good Counsel Special School on:

Date: _____

Chairperson: _____

Signature: _____

Review Date: _____

Link to Wellbeing Policy

OLGC recognises the strong relationship between inclusion and wellbeing. Meaningful participation, belonging, positive relationships and community engagement contribute significantly to the wellbeing of students. The school's approaches to emotional wellbeing, mental health promotion, physical wellbeing, student support and pastoral care are outlined in the OLGC Wellbeing Policy.