

St Vincent's Castleknock College

Admissions Policy

Introduction to St Vincent's Castleknock College

St Vincent's Castleknock College (also known as 'Castleknock College') was founded in 1835 by the Congregation of the Mission (the Vincentians). The Vincentians, named after the French priest and teacher St Vincent de Paul, remain the College Trustees. The College motto is *Nos autem in nomine Domini*.

St Vincent de Paul's charism is best captured in one statement he made: '*God desires first and foremost the heart ... and then the work.*'

The Mission Statement of the College is reflected in the ethos of the College:

Mission Statement

To have a College which is concerned with the development of the whole person in a Christian atmosphere, which encourages involvement in a balance of religious, intellectual, cultural and sporting activities; and which promotes the growth of self-worth and respect for others in the spirit of St Vincent de Paul.

The mission is achieved through the objectives of St Vincent's Castleknock College which are:

- To pursue excellence in all areas of College life: academic, creative, religious, cultural and sporting,
- To nurture a friendly and caring environment which allows each student to develop his own natural talents and gifts,
- To recognise the College's responsibility towards the wider community in developing a spirit of service,
- To offer opportunities for the spiritual development of each member of the College community.

The aim of St Vincent's Castleknock College is to enable each of its students to reach full development in a harmonious growth of the whole person. It promotes this aim of integral formation by many varied activities, religious, academic, social, cultural and sporting, which are conducted by means of personal interaction and shared commitments and experiences by the students in the context of life within the College. In this task the College recognises that the primary responsibility for the education of children rests with their parents or guardians and seeks to co-operate closely with and to be as helpful as possible to them in the fulfilment of that responsibility.

St Vincent's Castleknock College has learned from St Vincent de Paul the importance of a mild and gentle approach and of easy and friendly relationships. In the rule of life which he wrote for "the little company" the name by which he always referred to his Vincentian followers, he asked them, in a touching phrase, "to live together after the manner of dear friends". They were to be simple and unpretentious, friendly, and informal. He envisaged the relationship of his priests with one another as that of the members of a natural family. St Vincent's Castleknock College seeks to inculcate that family spirit in the college; hence the friendly and informal atmosphere.

St Vincent's Castleknock College has always kept in mind that school days are not merely a preparation for life, but are part of life, and is concerned that students should be happy within its walls. It profoundly believes that an atmosphere of physical well-being, moral integrity, mutual respect and academic stimulation is necessary for harmonious growth.

The College seeks to promote the spiritual and religious growth of its students by creating, as far as possible, a truly Christian atmosphere. It leads them to maturity within the context of the Christian faith, which should inform and colour their lives during their school days and continue to guide their conduct to the end of their lives. Hence it sees education not only as a preparation for life on earth, but for life eternal.

The development of the personality and character of its students has always been, and remains, a matter of paramount importance to the College. Personality and character are recognised as providing the basis for life's achievements and support in its ups and downs.

The talents of some students lie in sport, drama, debating, art or music. Such students are likely to find particular satisfaction and self-esteem in the extensive cultural, aesthetic and sporting facilities of the College.

In their relationships with one another the students are encouraged to live in a spirit of trust, tolerance and respect. St Vincent always saw Christ in his neighbour and his approach to the less privileged was one of caring and service. Hence, the College seeks to educate its students in their responsibility to the wider community. It is concerned with the removal of injustices in society and the promotion of a more human and humane world.

Ethos of the College

The St Vincent's Castleknock College ethos is one in which our College embraces a genuinely caring attitude, built on mutual respect, of a resourceful, flexible and approachable nature, encapsulating the true and patient commitment of a Christian and creating a collegiate atmosphere where social consciousness and tolerant attitudes are developed and respected.

Implementation of the Ethos of the College

Our ethos, the spirit and belief of St Vincent's Castleknock College, is the responsibility of everyone at the College. Both staff and students contribute to its creation and implementation in the day to day living of our Mission Statement. Since it rarely emerges by accident or by chance, its development has to be promoted and encouraged by practical means and lines of action. Hence, while our goal is for the highest academic achievement

coupled with a strong work ethic, we must all be concerned for the development of each individual's potential, value and self worth. This will primarily be achieved through the expertise, commitment, and positive influence of the teachers and the Special Needs staff.

Spiritual and moral development is not to be seen as the exclusive responsibility of religious education. Each subject offers its own unique opportunities for promoting and consolidating gospel values. Indeed it is very often outside the classroom that spiritual and moral values are communicated.

To best promote and foster the religious growth and development of the students, opportunity for prayer, celebration of the sacraments, retreats and meaningful liturgies will be provided through the school year.

Everyone within the College community must know that they belong to the Castleknock Family, and we must ensure that our visitors and new members experience a warm welcome and are cared for properly.

Our relationships with one another are based upon the recognition of the dignity and of the uniqueness of each individual and are conducted in a spirit of loyalty, understanding, and support.

All members of staff recognise their pastoral responsibility towards one another and towards the students. The Pastoral Care Programme and the work of the chaplaincy is an integral part of our school life, helping us to identify and promote the gifts and needs of each person in the College community.

So as to ensure that our students recognise their Christian and social responsibility, opportunities are given to them to voice their opinion on social issues, to study the social teaching of the Church, and to work with the under-privileged in our world. This will enable them to be grateful for all they have received, form their conscience in line with the gospel values and hopefully in later life to champion the cause of the poor in a truly Christian way.

Board of Management

The College has a Board of Management (or 'the Board') constituted in accordance with Irish educational law. There are eight members on the Board. Four of its members are nominated by the Trustees (the Vincentians), two by the full time teaching staff and two by the parents. The Board is responsible for the conduct, management and financial administration of the College subject to the general supervision and control of the Trustees. In addition to their general responsibilities as set out in the Articles of Management, the Board also has special responsibilities with regard to the upholding of the College Mission Statement and the College Ethos, the observance of the liturgical calendar, the continuation of the College traditions and the induction of first time students and parents into a Vincentian college.

The Headmaster is responsible for the internal organisation, management and discipline of the College subject to the direction of the Board. The Headmaster is supported by the Deputy Principal, Assistant Principals, Special Duty Teachers, Special Educational Needs Officer,

Guidance Teacher and the staff of teachers. They have the responsibility to make sure that the decisions of the Board are carried out in the day-to-day running of the school.

The President of the College, a Vincentian, acts as a representative of the Trustees at the College. He is the head of the Vincentian Community of confreres who live at St Vincent's Castleknock College.

Care of the Student

Each student year group (from 1st through 6th year) consists of between four and five classes. Each class is assigned a Class Tutor from the teaching staff who has a pastoral role: generating a positive class atmosphere, setting targets, ensuring that all students are happy at school, and organising events and tours for their class. Each class in 1st and 2nd Year also has two 6th year prefects assigned to it who get to know the students and makes sure that they are getting on well. Each year group is assigned a Year Head from the teaching staff who looks after the discipline, attendance and academic direction of the student year group. There is also a buddy-buddy system by which each first-year student is assigned a buddy from 6th year. The Guidance Office provides guidance and a counselling service to all students. The Chaplaincy Team helps students to develop their faith, organises liturgies, Masses and prayer-services, and guides the student body in religious matters. The Care Team meets every week to review how the College is supporting students who are perceived to need help.

Each year group in the College has its own Parents' Core Group. They consist of volunteer parents. These are charged with maintaining positive channels of communications between home and College. Two representatives of each Core Group are on the Parents' Representative Association (PRA) of St Vincent's Castleknock College. The PRA meets with the Headmaster about five times a year to ensure that there is good communication between the parents and the College.

The students have an elected Student Council. This body has its own constitution and chairman and is facilitated by a member of the teaching staff. There is also a system of College Prefects who are appointed by the Headmaster, having consulted with the staff and students of senior years.

The College

The School and Facilities

The school building comprises one linear building running east-west, and includes an extension which links Cregan House with MacNamara House. Cregan House dates from the 1950s and some parts of MacNamara House date from as far back as the 1830s. In 2006-7, the entire school was refurbished, extended and restored at a cost of close to €15 million. The centre piece of the school, where all students, teaching and administration staff interact on a daily basis, is St Vincent's Hall which serves as a foyer: the main junction between classrooms, chapel, refectories and sports facilities. The classrooms are located on all three floors of the buildings with a lift to cater for students and visitors who are less-mobile, have injuries, or who have special needs. The school contains five modern science laboratories,

music teaching and practice rooms, two art studios and an art gallery, the College Museum and fully equipped computer rooms. The 19th century College Chapel and pipe organ have also been restored, as have the College Concert & Assembly Hall and the Alton Library. The College is situated within seventy-acres of beautiful mature parkland which includes ten sports pitches, a fitness gym (with physio room and recovery room), a running track, a cricket crease and a table tennis room. In 2011, the College opened five newly constructed all-weather tennis courts complete with floodlights. In 2014, a floodlit, all-weather rugby astro was opened. A new gymnasium is under construction and will be opened in 2017.

A fee-paying School

St Vincent's Castleknock College is a Voluntary Catholic Secondary School under the trusteeship of the Congregation of the Missions, more commonly known as the Vincentians. It is a fee-paying school which prepares students for the Department of Education and Skills (DES) Junior Certificate and Leaving Certificate State examinations. The College follows the curricular programmes prescribed by the DES, which may be amended from time to time, in accordance with Irish law. There is a Scholarship Scheme for those who would not be in a position to pay the fees.

Curriculum

The Junior Certificate subjects are:

Irish, English, Mathematics, History, Geography, Science, SPHE (Social, Personal and Health Education), CSPE (Civic, Social and Political Education), Art, Music, French, Spanish, German, Classical Studies, Technical Graphics, and Business Studies. The College also provides Religious Education, Computer Education and Physical Education.

All students do Transition Year (4th Year). Students continue their Junior Cert subjects but are also given a taste of the new Leaving Cert subjects (such as Economics, Applied Maths and Design & Communication Graphics, etc). The Transition Year is divided into four 8-week modules. Reports are sent out at the end of each of these four modules. There are two weeks of Work Experience, followed by a review and a mock interview. There is a selection of special activities every Tuesday afternoon; these include such courses as Chinese Language & Culture, Fitness & Yoga, Swimming & Diving, Rowing, Bridge, etc.

For Leaving Certificate the subjects are Irish, English, Mathematics, History and Geography, Art, Music, French, Spanish, German, Chemistry, Biology, Physics, Agricultural Science, Applied Mathematics, Business, Economics, Accounting, Religion and DCG (Design & Communication Graphics). Classes are also provided in Religious Education, Physical Education and RSE (Relationships & Sexuality Education).

The College has a library with a qualified librarian and assistant librarian. There is a wide collection of books and research resources including Internet search facilities, newspapers, film, audio-books, Scrabble and chess sets. Students have access at designated times to two fully equipped Computer Rooms. Book Clubs and reading clubs meet in the library. Evening study takes place there, also.

There is a wide range of co-curricular activities. There is a musical or play performed each year. Music lessons are offered on a range of instruments. The choir sings at many ceremonies. There is a vibrant chess club. There are clubs for Irish, French, Spanish, Mandarin, Maths, Computers – and a lot more. There are vibrant debating societies in English, Irish, Spanish and French. The Senior and Junior Gold Medal Debates are significant annual events.

There is a vast array of sports at our College. Rugby is played by almost everyone (including all 1st and 2nd Year students) and is actively encouraged. All students should play at least one sport through the winter and another in the spring and summer. There is a place for everyone and everyone has a place, irrespective of ability. The sports are: rugby, tennis, cricket, athletics (track and field events), cross-country running, basketball, golf, table tennis, and soccer for Senior students. Students also play basketball, Olympic handball and badminton as part of the physical education programme. Gaelic football and hurling are sometimes played in the summer term. In recent years, the College has had an equestrian team.

Special Needs

For students who require extra assistance, a Learning Support Department with teachers and Special Needs Assistants is available. The Learning Support Department works with the student and his family to make sure that any necessary assessments are carried out, that all documentation is in order, that the Special Educational Needs Officer (SENO) is informed, and that an appropriate learning programme is put in place.

While every effort will be made by St Vincent's Castleknock College to meet the special needs of every student, there may be cases where the school will be unable to meet some or all the needs of an individual applicant student.

School Day

Class begins at 8:40am Monday to Friday and ends at 3:45pm on each day except Wednesday when class ends at 1:00pm. Wednesday afternoons and Saturday mornings are usually dedicated to sports activities (matches, competitions, etc), while training sessions will be undertaken on most other days.

Each school day starts with a 12-minute period in class with the Class Tutor. This period is known as LAPC (Literacy and Pastoral Care). During this time the Class Tutor takes the register and deals with any pastoral care issues. However, the real purpose is to enable students read any book of their choice in silence so as to enhance their literacy skills.

The College is open for 167 days in the school year.

A parent-teacher meeting is arranged once a year for each year.

Admission Policy

The Board of Management of St Vincent's St Vincent's Castleknock College is committed to an Admission Policy which reflects the spirit and meaning of the Education Act 1998, the Education (Welfare) Act 2000 and the Equal Status Act 2000. This policy was last updated in January 2017.

St Vincent's Castleknock College aims to achieve the highest academic standard in its students. The gifts and talents of the students are sensitively assessed in order to enable them to realise their potential and the College expects them to commit themselves to academic achievement commensurate with their abilities. The widest possible range of subjects is provided from which they may choose, with appropriate guidance, those which best satisfy their interests, needs and aspirations. Student guidance extends to preparation for a wide range of third level courses and occupations. This is based on the identification and fostering of the talents of each individual student. While every effort is made to allow students study the subjects of their choice, it is sometimes impossible for every student to be taught all of their preferred subjects.

St Vincent's Castleknock College recognises parents as the primary educators of their children. Parents who decide to apply for a place for their son in the College should be aware of the character, aims, Mission Statement and ethos of the College. While this does not preclude a person of another faith from attending the College, it is important that a parent should be aware that in sending their son to the College they have decided to send him to a Catholic school. The College respects and celebrates diversity of tradition, values, beliefs, languages and ways of life in a more pluralist society. This is balanced with the aims and objectives of a Catholic education. Where non-Catholic parents accept a place for their student in the College those parents are also undertaking to provide religious instruction for their own child. That service is not provided in the College. All students attend RE classes, whatever their faith. In the Senior Cycle, RE is offered as a Leaving Cert subject. Students of any faith may opt to choose this subject.

Fee-paying

St Vincent's Castleknock College is a fee-paying secondary school in the voluntary sector. The current annual fee structure is available from the Administrator's Office. There are various methods of payment to facilitate our parents. Arrangement for the payment of fees must be made before registration at the start of each academic year towards the end of August. In order to retain a place in the College all students' fees must be paid by the due date. Otherwise the place may be forfeited and given to an applicant on the waiting list.

The College operates within the regulations laid down, from time to time, by the Department of Education and Skills (DES).

Application Forms

An application form is available on the College website www.castleknockcollege.ie or from reception (Telephone: 01-8213051). This form should be completed and returned to the

Admissions Officer. Parents should be aware that, all other criteria being equal, date of application is used to choose who gets a place and who does not. Hence, it is important to apply early. Applications must be accompanied by a Birth Certificate, the latest school report, any other reports of relevance and the application fee. The closing date for applications is 31 December in the year when the student is in 5th class (ie a year-and-a-half before the proposed entry to the College). Late applications may be considered only under very exceptional circumstances.

Right of Admission

The right of admission to a place in the College rests with the Board of Management. In making its decision to admit a student to the College, the Board may have due regard to the suitability of the student to the full school curriculum; his ability to adhere to the Code of Behaviour and the ethos of St Vincent's Castleknock College; and the health and safety of all staff and students. The Board may take into consideration any reports from the Headmaster which are deemed relevant to the application. Although every effort will be made to meet the needs of every student, parents should understand that the College may not be in a position to accommodate those needs in all circumstances. The Board will act in the best interest of all the students and staff of the College and according to the principles of natural justice.

Priority in creating the list of those who may be admitted

St Vincent's Castleknock College will normally admit four classes, with 25 students in each. However, the Board may decide to admit more than four classes in 1st year, depending on circumstances. The Board usually reserves between four and six places for scholarship students. These are students whose families would not be able to afford the fees.

The selection criteria for entry to St Vincent's Castleknock are as follows:

- 1) The first priority is to brothers of students already in the school or brothers of students who completed sixth year in previous years. This priority does not apply if the older brother was withdrawn from the College before completing his sixth year.
- 2) The second priority is given to the student who (along with his parents) is most in sympathy with the ethos of the College. This priority is for those families:
 - Who are open to and who will embrace the Vincentian ethos and values of our school.
 - For whom the Characteristic Spirit of the school is important.
 - Who are happy for their son to attend Religious Education classes.
 - Who want their family to be part of a wider Vincentian family which holds Christian values. This does not necessarily mean that the student must be a baptised Catholic, but rather that the family supports the Catholic values for which the Trustees founded the school. Indeed, there are students of many faiths (and none) in our school; tolerance and respect for people of other faiths is part of our ethos.
 - Who support our belief that sport and cultural activities are not an add-on, but part of the curriculum for every student.

- Who share our belief that Transition Year is an essential part of our six-year curriculum, and believe that Transition Year adds to the depth of the education we offer through the academic, religious, intellectual, cultural and sporting activities which take place in our College.
- 3) All other things being equal, places will be allocated to those whose application form arrives earliest.

Scholarship Students

Families who would like their son to come to St Vincent's Castleknock College but who cannot afford the fees may apply for a scholarship place. There are usually between four and six scholarship places. Since such places are reserved strictly for those who cannot afford the fees, it is not allowed to apply for an ordinary place (which means that the family COULD afford the fees) at the same time as applying for a scholarship place (which means the family COULD NOT afford the fees). The application form for scholarship places is on the College website. The closing date is 31 December prior to the intended date of entry. Usually, the families are interviewed in January/February of the year of admission and places are awarded to those who deserve the place the most and who meet the College's selection criteria. There is no appeals procedure under the Scholarship Scheme.

Procedure for entry into First Year

- 1) Parents must lodge a fully completed application form together with the stated application fee. The deadline is December 31 of the year when the student begins 5th Class. Parents are required to furnish the latest primary school report, any relevant educational or psychological report on the student relating to any special educational needs or any medical condition or disability. This is important as the College will apply to the Department of Education and Skills (DES) for the resources to support any successful applicant whose reports warrant learning support.
- 2) Parents are asked to allow the Headmaster, if he sees fit, to contact the Principal of the primary school to enquire about the student.
- 3) Parents and their sons will be invited to visit the College for the Open Evening which will be notified in advance and advertised through our feeder schools and in the local press. The purpose of this day is for prospective students (and their families) to experience the academic, religious, cultural and sports facilities of the College, to meet some of the students and teaching staff, and to meet other prospective students of their own age in a relaxed atmosphere.
- 4) Parents and student applicants are invited to the College for private interview by a senior member of the College community.
- 5) In the context of the Mission and Ethos statements of the College a discussion takes place at interview on the prospective match of the talents and aptitudes of the student with these statements. Parents are also invited to discuss their willingness to support the Mission and Ethos statements in practice.
- 6) A list of the student applicants who have satisfied the criteria outlined above is prepared, based on the order of priority set out above and presented to the Board for approval.

- 7) Parents of successful applicants are notified by post that their son has been offered a place in the College.
- 8) On acceptance of an offer of a place a non-refundable deposit is required to be paid to the College. This deposit will be refunded when the student is in 6th Year through a reduction in fees. The deposit is forfeited if the student is withdrawn from the College before 6th Year.
- 9) Before their son starts in First Year, the parents of each student must sign an undertaking that their son will abide by the St Vincent's Castleknock College Code of Behaviour.
- 10) Parents of students who are not being offered a place will be notified by post. They may be offered a place on the waiting list which will be dealt with in sequential order.

Application for Admission to a year other than First Year

Applications made for places in other years (2nd to 6th) will be assessed on a case-by-case basis. The application procedure is as follows:

- 1) Parents must lodge a fully completed application form (from the College website) together with the stated application fee.
- 2) Parents must submit their son's most recent school report from his present school as well as any educational or psychological report or other reports which may be relevant to the application.
- 3) The Headmaster (or another senior member of the College community) interviews the student and parents. In the context of the Mission and Ethos statements of the College a discussion takes place at interview on the prospective match of the talents and aptitudes of the student with these statements. Parents are also invited to discuss their willingness to support the Mission and Ethos statements in practice. The Headmaster contacts the student's former school(s) to get a character reference and a disciplinary report.
- 4) The Headmaster makes a recommendation to the Board which may offer a place to an applicant who has satisfied the entry criteria provided:
 - (a) there is space for the student applicant in the relevant year
 - (b) that the student and his parents subscribe to the Mission and Ethos statements of the College
 - (c) that the student has made sufficient progress in his current or former schools to permit him to cope with the normal demands of the College's academic programme
 - (d) that the student's behaviour and participation in his previous school(s) demonstrates that he is compatible with the mission and ethos of the College
 - (e) that the Board is satisfied with the reasons for the student's transferring from the other school.
- 5) The Board of Management may refuse an application in circumstances where it is concerned that the admission of the applicant student would have a negative impact on the common good of the College or be a risk to the health and safety of others in the College or that the College is not equipped to cater for the individual needs of the applicant student.
- 6) If the application is successful, parents of a student transferring from another school will be required to pay the appropriate deposit prior to admission to the College. This deposit

will be refunded when the student is in 6th Year through a reduction in fees. The deposit is forfeited if the student is withdrawn from the College before 6th Year.

- 7) A transferring student may be required to complete a series of assessments at the College which will be used to assign the student to a class, study subjects and level.
- 8) Prior to commencement in the College the parents and the student must sign an undertaking that the student will abide by the St Vincent's Castleknock College Code of Behaviour.

Appeals

In accordance with Section 29 of the Education Act (1998), parents and/or guardians have a right to appeal a refusal by a school to enrol a student. The Appeal Form is available through the College or from the DES website www.education.ie. The appeals procedure is in accordance with the statutory guidelines, which are explained on that website.

Last reviewed in January 2017