

‘Performance Lab’, Gym and Exercise Policy February

2026

1. Introduction and Rationale

This policy outlines the approach of the school to the provision of physical education, gym use, and exercise activities in our school community setting. The school recognises the vital role of physical activity in promoting students’ physical health, mental wellbeing, confidence, resilience, and lifelong positive attitudes towards exercise.

The policy is informed by the requirements of the Department of Education, relevant health and safety legislation, child protection guidelines, and best practice in physical education.

2. How was this policy developed?

This policy outlines the rationale and procedure of St. Mary’s Performance Lab , Gym and Exercise Policy. This policy reinforces elements of the school mission statement which advocates providing a safe and secure learning environment for each student and ensuring a duty of care at all times while the school is in operation. The policy has been developed following consultation between students, staff, parents, Principal and Board of Management. This policy will be reviewed regularly. The Policy on the Performance Lab , Gym and Exercise aims to provide clear and transparent guidelines.

3. . School Ethos

This policy is in keeping with the school mission statement. School Mission Statement St. Mary's Secondary School, Charleville is a voluntary catholic secondary school for girls only under the trusteeship of CEIST. The mission of St Mary's Secondary School is to provide holistic education, in the Catholic tradition, for all our students. We are committed to the academic, creative, emotional, spiritual and physical development of each student, in a caring and safe environment.

4. Aims of the Policy

- Promote safe, inclusive, and positive participation in gym and exercise activities ●
- Encourage lifelong engagement in physical activity and healthy lifestyles ● Support students' physical, emotional, and social development
- Ensure equality of access and opportunity for all students
- Provide clear guidance on supervision, safety, and appropriate conduct

3. Scope of the Policy

This policy applies to:

- All students enrolled in the school
- All teaching staff, particularly Physical Education (PE) teachers
- Visiting coaches, instructors, and external providers
- All gym, exercise, and physical activity facilities on school premises and during school-related activities off-site
- Extracurricular activities which are running before/during and after school school hours.

4. Physical Education Programme

St. Mary's provides a comprehensive Physical Education programme in line with the Senior Cycle and Junior Cycle Physical Education specifications issued by the Department of Education.

Senior Cycle Physical Education

At Senior Cycle, Physical Education aims to:

- Enable students to take responsibility for their own physical activity and wellbeing
- Develop informed, confident, and competent participants in physical activity ● Promote lifelong engagement in health-enhancing physical activity ● Encourage leadership, teamwork, and personal goal-setting

Senior Cycle PE places an emphasis on student choice, personal performance improvement, and reflection on learning.

The introduction of the gym facility in the school will allow students to experience and have the choice to study LCPE for their Leaving Certificate. A subject which will be new to our school here in St. Mary's.

Junior Cycle Physical Education

At Junior Cycle, Physical Education aims to:

- Develop students' physical literacy, including fundamental movement skills ● Build confidence, competence, and enjoyment in a wide range of physical activities
- Support personal and social development through teamwork, cooperation, and fair play
- Promote positive attitudes towards physical activity and wellbeing

Junior Cycle PE focuses on learning through participation, exploration, and reflection,

with an emphasis on inclusion, personal progress, and positive experiences of movement.

A variety of activities may be offered across both cycles,

- including:
- Gym-based fitness activities
 - Dance and movement
 - Games and sports
 - Athletics and gymnastics
 - Health-related fitness

Link to the Wellbeing Programme and Junior Cycle Key Skills Physical Education

makes a central contribution to the school’s Wellbeing Programme and supports students in developing the Junior Cycle Key Skills, particularly:

Being Healthy: developing positive attitudes to physical activity, physical competence, and self-care

Managing Myself: setting personal goals, monitoring progress, and taking responsibility for participation

Staying Well: understanding the relationship between physical activity, mental health, and emotional wellbeing

Working with Others: cooperation, communication, leadership, and respect through team and group activities

Through PE, students are supported in building resilience, confidence, positive body image, and a sense of belonging within the school community.

5. Gym and Exercise Facilities

The school gym and exercise facilities are maintained to a high standard to ensure safety and accessibility. Equipment is checked regularly and stored appropriately.

Authorised Use of the Gym and Exercise Facilities

User Group	Permission Conditions of Use
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Physical Education teachers	Permitted All staff of the PE Department will have full access to the gym area at all times.
Other teaching staff	Conditional Teaching staff will have access to the gym once timetabled PE hours are not taking place and once extra-curricular activities are not booked.
Students (timetabled PE classes)	Permitted Students who have timetabled PE with PE teachers will have supervised access to the gym area. (Priority). Especially LCPE classes.
Students (extra-curricular activities)	Conditional Supervised access will be on a timetabled basis before or/and after school. Once activities are booked, this time is allocated for this group only.
Visiting coaches / instructors	Conditional Permission must be passed by the PE Department and school management. Garda

	vetting & school agreement must be completed.
External clubs or organisations	Not Permitted No access to external organisations. Policy may be reviewed in time.

After-school programmes	Conditional Programmes run by St. Mary's which are booked and timetabled will be granted supervised access to the gym with agreement with the PE Department and school management.
Community use (if applicable)	Not Permitted No access to the community. Policy may be reviewed in time.

Students may only use gym and exercise equipment:

- Under the supervision of a qualified teacher or authorised instructor
- In accordance with safety instructions and school rules
- For approved school activities

6. Health and Safety

The school is committed to providing a safe environment for all gym and exercise activities. St. Mary's is mindful that accidents and injuries may occur during PE activities, e.g. warm-up at the start of all physical activity, practising in confined spaces, use of equipment, supervision on visits out of the school, etc. In the event of a minor accident or injury occurring during PE, where a student has received a scrape, graze, bump or minor cut to arm, leg or body, the student is to remain under the supervision and care of the PE staff member. No student with a minor accident or injury is to be referred elsewhere or left unattended. The PE department is equipped to deal with such instances. A First Aid box, which also includes single use icepacks is stored in the PE Storeroom. In the event of a more serious accident or injury during PE, PE staff must contact a school First Aid Team. An up-to-date list of First Aid staff is in the staffroom.

Accidents during PE must be recorded on the Accident Report Form and submitted to the school office.

Automated External Defibrillators (AEDs)

St. Mary's provides automated external defibrillators (AEDs) which are to be used in the event of a sudden cardiac arrest. Early defibrillation using an AED is one of the vital links in the "Chain of Survival". An up-to-date list of AED trained personnel (First Aid Team) is in the staffroom. A defibrillator is located outside the school office. There is also a defibrillator available for teams going to matches.

Awareness of Medical Needs

- Parents/guardians are requested to inform the school of any medical condition or allergy from which their child may suffer.
- The SNA team records all relevant medical information on the Vsware medical tab and Class Profiles.
- A medical register of students is available both on Vsware and on the Class Profiles on the staff Google Drive. All staff are advised to identify any students in their class on the register and note the medical issue and appropriate action necessary if a medical issue arises.
- Relevant information is retained on the student file in the school office and by the year head.
- It is the parent/guardian's responsibility to notify the school of any changes in existing medical conditions.

15. Administration of Emergency Medication

The following section should be read in conjunction with the Administration of Medication Policy. It is the responsibility of the Parent/Guardian to inform the school of any medical needs their child may have. Parents/Guardians are to inform the school immediately if their child develops a medical condition/allergy at any point during the school year which has not been previously disclosed to the school.

- Non-prescription medication will not be stored or administered in the school.
- Prescription medication can only be stored/administered in the school following the submission of the written authority of the Parents/Guardians to the Principal.

Where students are suffering from chronic illnesses (for example, diabetes, epilepsy), Parents/Guardians should outline clearly in writing what can and cannot be done in a particular emergency, with reference to what may be a risk to the student.

Parents/Guardians are strongly advised to request a meeting with the Principal/Deputy Principals to put an Emergency Response Plan in place for the student.

Parents/Guardians should provide the school with the following information: ●

Name of student, details of illness and medication dosage and storage. ●

Whether they should be responsible for their own medication.

- The circumstances in which medication is to be administered to a student by a member of staff and consent for medication to be administered in these circumstances.

In emergency situations, qualified medical assistance will be secured at the earliest

opportunity. It is the responsibility of the Parents/Guardians to ensure that an adequate supply of medication is in stock, and it has not passed its expiry date. If medication passes its expiry date without being used, the student's Parents/Guardians will take responsibility for its safe disposal. Changes in prescribed medication (or dosage) should be notified immediately to the school with clear written instructions of the procedure to be followed in storing and administering the new medication. **IT IS THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE PARENTS/GUARDIANS TO ENSURE THAT THE DOSAGE NOTED ON THE CONTAINER IN WHICH THEIR STUDENT'S MEDICATION IS STORED IS ALSO AMENDED.** Arrangements for administration of medication to each student will be reviewed annually.

16. Record Keeping

- All accidents/injuries are recorded on an Accident Report Form, copies of which are in the staffroom. The student's name, date, location of accident/injury, nature of injury, action taken, and the signature of the treating staff member are recorded.
- Any accident/injury that occurs within class time and that necessitates the student receiving external medical treatment will be reported to the Health and Safety (HSA) Authority. <https://www.hsa.ie>
- Relevant medical information on all students is obtained at time of enrolment. This form also asks Parents/Guardians to list allergies and other medical conditions their child may have.

17. Contact Numbers

Where the student's accident/injury is significant, Parents/Guardians will be informed by telephone. Parents/Guardians are asked to provide at least two emergency contact numbers at the start of each school year. It is the responsibility of the Parents/Guardians to ensure these numbers are updated as necessary.

6.1 Supervision

- All gym and exercise activities must be supervised by a qualified teacher or approved instructor
- Appropriate teacher-to-student ratios will be maintained

6.2 Risk Assessment

- Risk assessments will be conducted for all activities
- Activities will be adapted to suit students' abilities, age, and experience
- Indemnity form to be signed by user and/or parent/guardian.

6.3 Medical Information

- Parents/guardians are required to inform the school of any medical conditions that may affect participation, as per St. Mary's First Aid Policy.
- Students with injuries or medical conditions must provide relevant medical certification where required.

6.4 Accidents and Emergencies

- First aid equipment will be readily available
- All accidents or injuries will be recorded in accordance with St. Mary's First Aid Policy.

7. Inclusion and Participation

The school is committed to inclusivity and encourages all students to participate in gym and exercise activities.

- Activities will be differentiated to cater for varying abilities and needs
- Reasonable accommodations will be made for students with additional needs
- A respectful and supportive environment will be promoted at all times

8. Attire and Personal Equipment

- Students are required to wear appropriate PE uniform and footwear as per St. Mary's Code Of Behaviour.
- Jewellery should be removed for safety reasons
- Long hair should be tied back during activities
- Failure to wear appropriate attire may result in modified participation for safety reasons.

9. Student Behaviour and Wellbeing

Students are expected to:

- Follow instructions from staff promptly
- Use equipment responsibly
- Show respect to peers, staff, and facilities
- Promote positive body image and avoid negative or inappropriate comments

Bullying, harassment, or discriminatory behaviour will be addressed in line with St. Mary's Code of Behaviour and Anti-Bullying Policy.

10. Child Protection

All gym and exercise activities are conducted in accordance with St. Mary's Child Safeguarding Statement and relevant child protection procedures.

- Appropriate boundaries will be maintained at all times
- Changing areas and supervision arrangements will respect students' privacy and dignity

11. External Providers and Activities

Where external coaches or instructors are engaged:

- They must be appropriately qualified and vetted
- They will operate under the supervision of school staff
- They must adhere to all school policies and procedures

12. Roles and Responsibilities

Board of Management

Ensures appropriate facilities and resources are provided

Review and ratify policy documents

School Management

Supports implementation of the policy

Ensures staff are informed and trained

Teachers

Plan and deliver safe and inclusive gym and exercise activities

Monitor student wellbeing and participation

Students

Engage positively and responsibly in activities

Follow safety rules and school policies

18. Relationship to Other School Policies

This policy should be read in conjunction with other relevant policies e.g., First Aid, Child Protection, Health and Safety, Code of Behaviour and Administration of Medication.

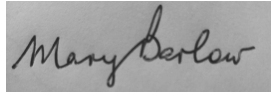
19. Policy Monitoring and Review

This policy and related policies will be reviewed annually. The policy may be reviewed at any time to make improvements deemed necessary by the school, or to take account of any relevant change in legislation or school policy. Indemnity form signed by all users prior to entering or participating in any activities in the facility.

Following ratification of this policy by the Board of Management, this Performance Lab, Gym and Exercise Policy was updated on the school's website. Hard copies of the policy are available to Parents/Guardians on request.

Signed

Chairperson, Board of Management):

A rectangular box containing a handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Mary Berlow".

Date: _____

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Margaret S. Finn".

Principal
Secretary to the Board