



# Admission Policy

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ST. JOHN'S SPECIAL SCHOOL, DUNGARVAN.

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## 1.0 Introduction

This Admission Policy complies with the requirements of the Education Act 1998, the Education (Admission to Schools) Act 2018 and the Equal Status Act 2000. In drafting this policy, the Board of Management of the school has consulted with school staff, the school Patron and with parents of children attending the school.

The policy was approved by the school Patron on October 1<sup>st</sup> 2021 and published on the school's website and is available, on request, in hardcopy.

The relevant dates and timelines for St. John's Special School's admission process are set out in the school's annual admission notice which is published each year on the school's website; this is done at least one week before the commencement of the admission process for the school year concerned.

This policy must be read in conjunction with the annual admission notice for the school year concerned.

The application form for admission is published on the school's website and is available, on request, in hardcopy.

## 2.0 Characteristic Spirit and General Objectives of the School

2.1 St. John's School is a co-educational, Special School with a Catholic ethos. The Bishop of Waterford and Lismore is the Patron of this school.

2.2 'Catholic schools are communities which are open, welcoming and inclusive. Therefore, Catholic schools may include children who adhere to other religions or other stances for living. While mindful of their duty to educate in the distinctive beliefs, values, and practices of the Catholic community, teachers will bear witness to an attitude of respect for and appreciation of all'. *'The Catholic Preschool & Primary Religious Education Curriculum p15'*

2.3 In accordance with S.15 (2) (b) of the Education Act, 1998 the Board of Management of St. John's School shall uphold, and be accountable to the Patron for so upholding, the characteristic spirit of the school as determined by the cultural, educational, moral, religious, social, linguistic and spiritual values and traditions which inform, and are characteristic of, the objectives and conduct of the school.

2.4 St John's school caters for students between 4-18 years of age who have been assessed as having, primarily, a mild or moderate general learning disability. It was originally established to cater for children in the 'mild' range, but the intake has changed over time, especially in line with moves internationally to integrate children with Special Needs in the mainstream school. At St John's there is also, nowadays, two separate classes for children with severe to profound general learning disabilities. Some students at St John's present with multiple disabilities and co-occurring needs.

2.5 Students and staff work in a safe and modern educational environment supported by the Board of Management, Department of Education and Skills (DOES) and the Health Service Executive (HSE). While recognizing difference in ability and need, all students are offered a wide variety of learning activities including cultural events, social and life skills programmes and sporting activities, through which they are enabled and encouraged to reach their potential, and thereby participate as fully as possible in the life of their local communities and society in general. While it varies considerably throughout the school, students are exposed to, and taught, a curriculum which includes, but is not limited to, the National Primary Curriculum, Junior Cycle Levels 1 and 2 and elements of Woodwork, Computer Studies and Cookery along with programs within the National Adult Literacy Agency.

2.6 The criteria for decisions regarding enrolment are set out in this Admissions Policy and are contingent on the availability of a suitable vacancy in a class group which is relevant to the age and educational ability and needs of the applicant. It should be noted that class size at the school varies, and is determined from time to time by DOES guidelines and in consultation with the Special Educational Needs Organiser for the area.

2.7 There is a commitment to openness, transparency and accountability at St John's which embraces a climate of mutual respect and co-operation among the school community and beyond. The provisions of this Enrolment Policy are intended to be read, understood and accepted in this vein.

### 3.0 Admission Statement

St. John's Special School will not discriminate in its admission of a child to the school on any of the following:

- (a) the gender of the child, or the applicant in respect of the child concerned, (b) the civil status of the child, or the applicant in respect of the child concerned, (c) the family status of the child, or the applicant in respect of the child concerned, (d) the sexual orientation of the child, or the applicant in respect of the child concerned, (e) the religion of the child, or the applicant in respect of the child concerned, (f) the disability of the child, or the applicant in respect of the child concerned, (g) the race of the child, or the applicant in respect of the child concerned,
- (h) the child's membership of the Traveller Community, or the applicant in respect of the child concerned, or
- (i) that the child, or the applicant in respect of the child concerned, has special educational needs.

As per section 61 (3) of the Education Act 1998, 'civil status', 'disability', 'discriminate', 'family status', 'gender', 'race', 'religion', 'sexual orientation' and 'Traveller community' shall be construed in accordance with section 3 of the Equal Status Act 2000.

#### Special schools

St. John's is a school which, with the approval of the Minister for Education and Skills, provides an education exclusively for students within a category or categories of special educational needs, i.e. a Mild, Moderate, Severe to Profound General Learning Disability. Please note, that Section 3 indicates the school's compliance with relevant legislation on discrimination. With regard to (f) and (i), the school does not discriminate on grounds of disability *per se*, but may refuse to admit a child whose disability does not match the school or class group's entry criteria; such refusal to admit a child should not be construed as discrimination.

## 4.0 Categories of Special Educational Needs catered for in the school/special class

St. John's Special School, with the approval of the Minister for Education and Skills, provides an education, mainly, for students with **mild or moderate general learning disability**; **there is also two separate classes for children with severe to profound general learning disabilities**. **Some students at St John's present with multiple disabilities and co-occurring needs.**

## 5.0 Admission of Students

5.1 This school shall admit each child for whom application for enrolment is made, except where –

- a) the school or relevant class group is over-subscribed (please see section 6 below for further details)
- b) a parent/guardian of a child, on request by the Principal, in accordance with section 23(4) of the Education (Welfare) Act 2000, fails to confirm in writing that the Code of Behaviour of the school is acceptable to him/her, and that s/he will make all reasonable efforts to ensure compliance with such code by the student.
- c) The primary disability of the child does not fall into one of the specified categories of special educational need catered for by the school.

5.2 Enrolment Procedures

- a) Children whose primary disability is assessed as mild, moderate, severe or profound intellectual disability will be considered for enrolment.
- b) The enrolment of students is delegated to the Principal who will consult with the Board of Management and appropriate professionals.
- c) Class sizes may vary within the school, depending on the number of pupils in the group presenting with additional needs; a class may also vary in size over time. In this regard, some classes may be deemed by the Principal to be full to capacity, and in this case the Board of Management may direct that no additional pupils may enrol in these classes during the year. School capacity varies according to the needs profile of the children we are catering for at a particular time. This situation is quite common in Special Schools, and should not be construed as a mechanism for the school to refuse admission of any particular child.

5.3 Steps in the Application and Enrolment Process

- a) The Annual Admissions Notice will be published on the school website at least one week before the school can begin accepting applications. (This will be during October each year.)
- b) Parents/guardians may contact the school by telephone, email, in writing or by calling to the school, to request an 'Application for Admittance' Form, our Enrolment and Admissions Policy and Consent Form. These are also available for download from our website.

c) Parents/guardians are asked to return the following, by the closing date as set out in the admissions notice.

**(Applications which do not have all of the below information included will be returned).**

✓ Completed **Application for Admittance Form** signed by the parent(s) or legal guardians;

✓ **Psychological Assessment Report** (within the last TWO years) which states **ALL** of the following:

- **The child has a Mild, Moderate or Severe to Profound General Learning Disability.**
- **Recommends that a Special School placement is required specifically and categorically.**
- **That there is mention of complex/severe learning needs to require special school placement**
- **States what those complex/severe learning needs are specifically.**

• Any other professional reports available which would support an application, including, but not limited to:

- Psychiatric Assessment,
- Speech & Language Assessment,
- Occupational Therapy Report,
- Social Work Report,
- Physiotherapy Report
- Medical Report for medical conditions experienced by the child.
- ASD Diagnostic Report if applicable.

Important to Note:

**\* As soon as an Application (**which satisfies criteria**) is received by the school, it is date stamped and a notification of receipt is issued to the sender.**

**\*Confirmation of receipt of the completed application form is not an indication of a placement being secured.**

5.4 Applications will only be considered:

Where the application form was fully completed and signed and had included all enclosures appropriate to the application and received in the school, in full, on or before the closing date for applications as set out in the admissions statement for that year of entry. If all requested documents listed in the application form are not included with the application by the closing date, the application will be deemed incomplete, will be returned to the child's parents/guardians and will not be considered. If the missing part of a previously incomplete application is submitted, the full application will be deemed to have been received on the date of re-submission and not the date of the original submission.

## **6.0 Over-subscription**

Section 2.6 above refers to class size. It sometimes occurs that a particular class group has reached its maximum enrolment, as determined by the age, assessed ability and needs of the pupils therein; this class is 'full' and the enrolment of a further pupil is deemed to be 'over-subscription'.

In the event that the school (or a class group) is over-subscribed, the school will, when deciding on applications for admission, apply the following selection criteria, in the order listed below, to those applications that are received within the timeline for receipt of applications as set out in the school's annual admission notice:

Priority will be given as to whether:

- A suitable vacancy should exist in a class appropriate to the needs of the student in line with DOES guidelines for class size and staffing.
- Student fits criteria, and has not got a current school placement

\*Important to Note

The receipt by the school of a completed Application Form or the placement of a child's name on a list, however early, does not confer an automatic right to a place in the school. The school does not operate its applications process on a first come, first served basis - each application will be considered on its merits and in consideration of the places available in the various classes in the school.

## **7.0 What will not be considered or taken into account**

In accordance with section 62(7)(e) of the Education Act, the school will not consider, or take into account, any of the following in deciding on applications for admission, or when placing a student on a waiting list for admission to the school:

- (a)** a student's prior attendance at a pre-school or pre-school service, including naíonraí (Irish language preschools), other than in relation to a student's prior attendance at—
  - (I) an early intervention class, or
  - (II) an early start pre-school, specified in a list published by the Minister from time to time;
- (b)** the payment of fees or contributions (howsoever described) to the school;
- (c)** a student's academic ability, skills or aptitude;  
(other than in relation to:
  - admission to (a) a special school or (b) a special class insofar as it is necessary in order to ascertain whether or not the student has the category of special educational needs concerned
- (d)** the occupation, financial status, academic ability, skills or aptitude of a student's parents;
- (e)** a requirement that a student, or his or her parents, attend an interview, open day or other meeting as a condition of admission;
- (f)** a student's connection to the school by virtue of a member of his or her family attending or having previously attended the school.
- (g)** the date and time on which an application for admission was received by the school, This is subject to the application being received at any time during the period specified for receiving applications set out in the annual admission notice of the school for the school year concerned.

This is also subject to the school making offers based on existing waiting lists (up until 31<sup>st</sup> January 2025 only).

## 8.0 Decisions on applications

All decisions on applications for admission to St. John's will be based on the following:

- The school's admission policy
- The school's annual admission notice (where applicable)
- The information provided by the applicant in the school's official application form. This presumes that the form was received during the period specified in our annual admission notice for receiving applications

(Please see [section 14](#) below in relation to applications received outside of the admissions period and [section 15](#) below in relation to applications for places other than the schools intake group.)

Selection criteria that are not included in our school admission policy will not be used to make a decision on an application for a place in our school.

8.1 While recognising the right of parents/guardians to enrol their child in the school of their choice, the Board of Management is also responsible for respecting the rights of the existing school community and, in particular, the children already enrolled. This requires balanced judgements, which are guided by the principles of natural justice and acting in the best interest of all children.

8.2 After the closing date for receipt of applications, the Board of Management will meet to determine the allocation of places, as per the criteria set out below.

- a) The pupil/teacher ratio will be appropriate to the needs of the child and those already in the class. An application will be treated as an application for a particular class group, based on the child's age. Each applicant will be assigned to a class based on age, assessed ability and needs and all decisions on places are contingent on the availability of a suitable vacancy in the class relevant to the educational needs and age of an applicant. Class groupings and numbers in classes vary from year to year as students leave the school, move on to other classes or depending on the particular disability needs of each class group - which affects the teacher-pupil staffing ratio.
- b) There is sufficient physical space in the relevant classroom (in light of the excerpt from Circular 38/2010 at Appendix 1 hereto) and the appropriate age range class for that child has not reached full capacity. It may occur that an applicant with multiple diagnoses requires the equivalent of more than one place in that class (in line with DOES guidelines for class size and staffing). This will, correspondingly, reduce the number of other places available or may mean that even where a class grouping may appear as having available places, that class would now be full in light of that applicant's needs.
- c) We accept applications from children in the age range of four by September 1<sup>st</sup> in the year of entry to less than 18 on the 1<sup>st</sup> September in the year of entry.
- d) The child is ordinarily resident (i.e. is ordinarily resident with at least one parent) within the accepted catchment area of the school and has provided two proofs of address (with an Eircode) from one of the areas listed, and we are the nearest suitable Special School.

Please note

- All reports relating to a child, which have been drafted by a psychologist, psychiatrist, behavioural therapist, paediatrician or other relevant medical practitioner (who has produced a report relating to the child's cognitive development, learning ability or



educational development) within the two years preceding application must be provided to the school for assessment by the Board of Management. The withholding of existing and known reports from the Board of Management may invalidate an Admission Application at any time. If, after admission, it later becomes apparent that reports or relevant information has been withheld from the school, this may result in an application being invalidated or, if it becomes apparent after admission, in the child involved losing their place in the school.

- Siblings of students in the school are not automatically entitled to a place in the school.

## **9.0 Notifying Applicants of Decisions**

Applicants will be informed of the school's decision in writing, within the timeline outlined in the annual admissions notice.

If a student is not offered a place in our school, the reasons why they were not offered a place will be communicated in writing to the applicant, including, where applicable, details of the student's ranking against the selection criteria and details of the student's place on the waiting list for the school year concerned.

If the child meets the Threshold Criteria below but admission is refused on the ground that the class is full, parents/guardians will be informed that there is currently no place available but will be asked if they wish for their child's information be kept on file for that current academic year in the event that a space should arise. The school will advise the parents of the appeals procedure set out below.

If the child does not meet the Threshold Criteria below, the parents/guardians will be advised that the school is formally declining a place to their child in the school and will advise the parents of the appeals procedure set out below.

Applicants will be informed of the right to seek a review/right of appeal of the school's decision (see [section 18](#) below for further details).

## **10.0 Acceptance of an offer of a place by an applicant**

- If the Board of Management decides to admit a child, a letter of offer will be sent to parents/guardians along with the latest copy of the school's Code of Behaviour. This letter of offer will be issued within 21 days of the Closing Date for applications (or within 21 days of the receipt of the application, whichever is the later). The offer will be subject to the conditions set out in section 11 below.
- Parents/guardians will be requested to respond to the offer of a place in the school in writing by a specified date (failure to respond by that date will result in the offer lapsing) and will return to the school the fully completed information forms including compliance with the Code of Behaviour, the application for NCSE school transport and Special Needs Assistant (SNA) support forms, if applicable.
- If the Board of Management has accepted the child for admission and the parents/guardians wish to accept the offer, the Board will then inform the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) of the decision and seek its approval for the placement, and its sanction for school transport arrangements and other staffing resources as required. This process may take six to eight weeks.

Please Note

In accepting an offer of admission from St. John's, you must indicate—

(a) whether or not you have accepted an offer of admission to another school (or schools). If you have accepted such an offer, you must also provide details of the offer(s) concerned and (b) whether or not you have applied for and are awaiting confirmation of an offer of admission from another school or schools, and if so, you must provide details of the other school(s) concerned.

## **11.0 Circumstances in which offers may not be made or may be withdrawn**

An offer of admission may not be made or may be withdrawn by St. John's where—

- (i) it is established that information contained in the application is false or misleading. (ii) an applicant fails to confirm acceptance of an offer of admission on or before the date set out in the annual admission notice of the school.
- (iii) the parent/guardian of a student, when required by the Principal in accordance with section 23(4) of the Education (Welfare) Act 2000, fails to confirm in writing that the Code of Behaviour of the school is acceptable to him or her and that he or she shall make all reasonable efforts to ensure compliance with such code by the student; or
- (iv) an applicant has failed to comply with the requirements of 'acceptance of an offer' as set out in section 10 above.

## **12.0 Sharing of Data with other schools**

Applicants should be aware that section 66(6) of the Education (Admission to Schools) Act 2018 allows for the sharing of certain information between schools in order to facilitate the efficient admission of students.

Section 66(6) allows a school to provide a Patron or another Board of Management with a list of the students in relation to whom—

- (a) an application for admission to the school has been received,
- (b) an offer of admission to the school has been made, or
- (c) an offer of admission to the school has been accepted.

The list may include any or all of the following:

- (i) the date on which an application for admission was received by the school;
- (ii) the date on which an offer of admission was made by the school;
- (iii) the date on which an offer of admission was accepted by an applicant;
- (iv) a student's personal details including his or her name, address, date of birth and personal public service number (within the meaning of section 262 of the Social Welfare Consolidation Act 2005).

## **13.0 In the event of over-subscription**

In the event of there being more applications for the school year concerned than places available, a list of children will be compiled; this list will include those whose applications for admission to St John's School were unsuccessful due to the school being oversubscribed and will remain valid for the school year in which admission is being sought.

Placement on the list of St John's School is in the order of priority assigned to the students' applications after the school has applied the selection criteria in accordance with this admission policy.

Applicants whose applications are received after the closing date, outlined in the Annual Admission Notice, will be placed at the end of the list in order of the date of receipt of the application.

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Offers of any subsequent places that become available, for and during the school year in relation to which admission is being sought, will be made to those students on the list, in accordance with the order of priority in relation to which the students have been placed on the list.

## **14.0 Late Applications**

All applications for admission received after the closing date as outlined in the annual admission notice will be considered and decided upon in accordance with our school's admissions policy, the Education Admissions to School Act 2018 and any regulations made under that Act.

Late applicants will be notified of the decision in respect of their application no later than three weeks after the date on which the school received the application. Late applicants will be offered a place if there is place available. In the event that there is no place available, the name of the applicant will be added to the list as set out in Section 13.

## **15.0 Procedures for admission of students during the school year.**

The procedures of the school in relation to the admission of students who are not already admitted to the school, after the commencement of the school year in which admission is sought, are as follows:

- a) To facilitate children whose need to change school is based on their family's move to a new location, or for some other exceptional reason such as a change of foster placement within the academic year, applications may also be reviewed during the year and an applicant may be admitted subject to there being a suitable vacancy within the particular age group and the applicant meets the criteria for admission as set out in this admissions policy.
- b) Enrolment other than at the commencement of the school year will be regarded as exceptional and will only occur should a vacancy be available, or have arisen, in the applicable age range class during the course of the school year. #

## **16.0 Declaration in relation to the non-charging of fees**

The Board of St. John's School or any persons acting on its behalf will not charge fees for, or seek payment or contributions (howsoever described) as a condition of-

- (a) an application for admission of a student to the school, or
- (b) the admission or continued enrolment of a student in the school

## **17.0 Arrangements regarding students not attending religious instruction**

A written request should be made to the Principal of the school. A meeting will then be arranged with the parent(s) to discuss how the request may be accommodated by the school.

## **18.0 Reviews/appeals**

### Review of decisions by the Board of Management

The parent/guardian of the child, or in the case of a child who has reached the age of 18 years, the child, may request the Board to review a decision to refuse admission. Such requests must be made in accordance with Section 29C of the Education Act 1998.

The timeline within which such a review must be requested and the other requirements applicable to such reviews are set out in the procedures determined by the Minister under section 29B of the Education Act 1998 which are published on the website of the Department of Education and Skills.

The Board will conduct such reviews in accordance with the requirements of the procedures determined under Section 29B and with section 29C of the Education Act 1998.

Note: Where an applicant has been refused admission due to the school being over-subscribed, the applicant must request a review of that decision by the Board of Management prior to making an appeal under section 29 of the Education Act 1998.

Where an applicant has been refused admission due to a reason other than the school being over-subscribed, the applicant may request a review of that decision by the Board of Management prior to making an appeal under section 29 of the Education Act 1998.

### Right of Appeal

Under Section 29 of the Education Act 1998, the parent/guardian of the student, or in the case of a student who has reached the age of 18 years, the student, may appeal a decision of this school to refuse admission.

An appeal may be made under Section 29 (1)(c)(i) of the Education Act 1998 where the refusal to admit was due to the school being over-subscribed.

An appeal may be made under Section 29 (1)(c)(ii) of the Education Act 1998 where the refusal to admit was due a reason other than the school being oversubscribed.

Where an applicant has been refused admission due to the school being over-subscribed, the applicant must request a review of that decision by the Board of Management prior to making an appeal under section 29 of the Education Act 1998. (see Review of decisions by the Board of

Management)

Where an applicant has been refused admission due to a reason other than the school being over-subscribed, the applicant may request a review of that decision by the Board of Management prior to making an appeal under section 29 of the Education Act 1998. (see Review of decisions by the Board of Management)

Appeals under Section 29 of the Education Act 1998 will be considered and determined by an independent appeals committee appointed by the Minister for Education and Skills.

The timeline within which such an appeal must be made and the other requirements applicable to such appeals are set out in the procedures determined by the Minister under section 29B of the Education Act 1998 will be considered and determined by an independent appeals committee appointed by the Minister for Education and Skills Education Act 1998 which are published on the website of the Department of Education and Skills.

## **19.0 Cooperation with NCSE under Section 37A**

St. John's Special School will cooperate with the National Council for Special Education in the performance by the Council of its functions under the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act 2004 relating to the provision of education to children with special educational needs, including in particular by the provision and operation of a special class or classes when requested to do so by the Council. St. John's Special School will comply with any direction served on the patron or the board, as the case may be, under section 37A and any direction served on the board under section 67(4B) of the Education Act.