

Admissions Policy of St. Declan's Special School

School Address: 35 Northumberland Road, Ballsbridge, Dublin 4

Roll number: 18569J

School Patrons: Archbishop of Dublin, under the Trusteeship of the Irish Jesuits

1. 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.

It is published on the school's website and will be made available in hardcopy, on request, to any person who requests it.

The relevant dates and timelines for St. Declan's Special School admission process are set out in the school's annual admission notice which is published annually on the school's website 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 will be made available in hardcopy on request to any person who requests it.

2. Characteristic spirit and general objectives of the school

St. Declan's Special School is fuelled by the Jesuit ethos, mission and spirit and it is these qualities described here which underpins all of the work carried out on a daily basis in St Declan's: Head, Heart, Hand

~ Head Developing competence in communication and social skills, learning to deal with situations in a calm and respectful manner. We learn to use our head and think of better ways to deal with others.

~ Heart A formed conscience that knows what is good and true and moves us to act in accordance to the rights of others. We work with the children to become large-hearted, being able to forgive and let things go; to try and be whole-hearted, doing

our best with the talents we have and to speak from the heart avoiding being ruled by passion or anger

~ Hand Generous hands that put our talents and gifts at the service of others.
Compassionate hands that tend to those who, in their need, have the greatest claim on us.

St. Declan's caters for children in the 4-12 years of age range who have:

- mild emotional disturbance and/or behavioural problems which significantly impair their engagement, socialisation and/or learning in mainstream school and
- whose cognitive functioning is within the borderline range of ability, or higher
- who do not have a history of behaviour that, in the view of the Board of Management, causes or threatens or may cause or may threaten physical harm to staff or other students

These difficulties must be the primary cause for enrolment in the school.

3. Admission Statement

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

- (a) the gender ground of the student or the applicant in respect of the student concerned,
- (b) the civil status ground of the student or the applicant in respect of the student concerned,
- (c) the family status ground of the student or the applicant in respect of the student concerned,
- (d) the sexual orientation ground of the student or the applicant in respect of the student concerned,
- (e) the religion ground of the student or the applicant in respect of the student concerned,
- (f) the disability ground of the student or the applicant in respect of the student concerned,
- (g) the ground of race of the student or the applicant in respect of the student concerned,
- (h) the Traveller community ground of the student or the applicant in respect of the student concerned, or
- (i) the ground that the student or the applicant in respect of the student concerned has special educational needs

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

Update as per DES instruction 2022:

St Declan's 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 Declan's 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."

Special schools

St. Declan's Special School is a school which, with the approval of the Minister for Education and Skills, provides an education exclusively for students with a category or categories of special educational needs specified by the Minister and does not discriminate in relation to the

admission of a student who does not have the category of needs specified because we can only cater to those children who meet our special needs criteria.

4. Categories of Special Educational Needs catered for in the school/special class

(a) In the case of a special school

St. Declan's Special School, with the approval of the Minister for Education and Skills, provides an education exclusively for students which caters for children with special needs from 4 to 12 years of age

- with mild emotional disturbance and/or behavioural problems which significantly impair their engagement, socialisation and/or learning in mainstream school and
- whose cognitive functioning is within the borderline range of ability, or higher

- an educational, care and behavioural needs profile that can be safely and appropriately supported within the resources, staffing allocation, therapeutic model and educational setting of the school.
- A letter of eligibility from the NCSE confirming that the child is known to them and the child has the required diagnosis and recommendation for a special class for children with mild emotional disturbance and/or behavioural problems.

These difficulties must be the primary cause for enrolment in the school and as agreed by the National Council for Special Education and Department of Education.

5. Admission of Students

This school shall admit each student that meets the criteria noted in Section 4 above seeking admission except where –

- a) the school is oversubscribed (please see section 6 below for further details)
- b) a parent 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

Special School

St. Declan's Special School provides an education exclusively for students in the 4-12 years of age range which caters for students with:

- mild emotional disturbance and/or behavioural problems which significantly impair their engagement, socialisation and/or learning in mainstream school and
- whose cognitive functioning is within the borderline range of ability, or higher and
- who do not have a history of behaviour that, in the view of the Board of Management, causes or threatens or may cause or may threaten physical harm.

These difficulties must be the primary cause for admission and the Board of Management may refuse admission to a student where the student does not have the specified category of special educational needs provided for by this school.

St. Declan's Special School may refuse admission to a student, where the student does not meet the criteria and suitability of special educational needs provided for by this school.

Any child applying to the school must have a recent documented and confirmed diagnosis as mentioned above which should be dated within the last 2 years. The

child must also have a written recommendation from a certified psychologist for specific education in a specialised setting. There is a new requirement set by the NCSE, that a letter from the NCSE recommending the child for a special school is mandatory. The principal of the school will ensure eligibility of applicants by analysing the applicant's reports to ensure the admissions criteria is met.

6. Oversubscription

In the event that the school is oversubscribed, 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:

Prior to applying the following selection criteria, an age profile will be defined for each of the six classes in the school using the date of birth of the pupil who is currently the youngest in the class and the date of birth of the pupil who is currently the eldest in the class. For an applicant to match the age profile of a particular class, their date of birth must fall on or between these two specified dates. Each applicant will be assigned to one of the five age profiles based on their date of birth and the place will be offered to the eldest child.

St. Declan's Special School accepts children from within the entire Diocese of Dublin and not just the local parish area.

The following selection criteria will then be applied:

a) The child's age matches the age profile of the class in which there is a place available as is the eldest of applicants

Note: In the event that there is more than one place available, and these places are in different classes, the remaining criteria (b) & (c) below will be applied individually to each age profile.

b) The child is a sibling of a child currently enrolled in the school.

c) The parent of the child has attended St. Declan's Special School.

In the event that there are two or more students tied for a place or places in any of the selection criteria categories above (the number of applicants exceeds the number of remaining places), the following arrangements will apply:

The names of all eligible applicants will be entered into a lottery.

In the event that there is more than one place available, and these places are in different classes, a separate lottery will be conducted for each class that is oversubscribed.

Only children whose date of birth matches the age profile of the class in question will be entered into the lottery for that class.

The lottery will be performed by the Principal and witnessed by an independent party.

For each lottery, the name of each eligible applicant will be placed in a drum. The Principal will draw names from the drum, one by one, until the drum is empty. The order in which the names are drawn from the drum will be recorded on a numbered list. The place or places available will be offered to the applicants in the order in which they appear on the list. If an applicant refuses the offer of a place, the place will be offered to the next candidate on the list, and so on until all places have been accepted.

7. 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,
 - (b) the payment of fees or contributions (howsoever described) to the school;
 - (c) a student's academic ability, skills or aptitude; other than in so far as necessary relation to ascertain whether or not the student has the category of special educational needs concerned with the school
 - (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;
- (other than, in the case of the school wishing to include a selection criterion based on (1) siblings of a student attending or having attended the school and/or (2) parents of a student having attended the school.

In relation to (2) parents having attended, the school may only apply these criteria to a maximum of 25% of the available spaces as set out in the school's annual admission notice).

(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.

8. Decisions on applications

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

- Our 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 received during the period specified in our annual admission notice for receiving applications

(Please see section 15 below in relation to applications received outside of the admissions period and section 16 below in relation to applications for places in years other than the 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.

9. Notifying applicants of decisions

Applicants will be informed in writing as to the decision of the school

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.

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. Acceptance of an offer of a place by an applicant

In accepting an offer of admission from St. Declan's Special School, you must indicate

(i) whether or not you have accepted an offer of admission for another school or schools. If you have accepted such an offer, you must also provide details of the offer or offers concerned and

(ii) 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 or schools concerned.**

11. 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. Declan's Special School 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 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. 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.

13. Waiting list in the event of oversubscription

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

Placement on the waiting list of St. Declan's Special 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. A waiting list will be compiled for each age profile using the procedures described in Section 6.

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 waiting list, in accordance with the order of priority in relation to which the students have been placed on the list.

14. 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 is no place available, the name of the applicant will be added to the waiting list as set out in Section 13.

15. Procedures for admission of students to other years and during the school year

The procedures of the school in relation to the admission of students who are not already admitted to the school to classes or years other than the school's intake group are as follows:

Due to the fact that St. Declan's Special School is a special school and does not have a regular yearly intake group as is the case in mainstream schools, the same procedures as outlined in Sections 6 and 13 above apply to all admissions, regardless of the age of the child and the class they wish to be admitted to.

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:

The procedures outlined in Section 13 of this policy apply.

16. Declaration in relation to the non-charging of fees

This rule applies to all schools.

The board of management of St. Declan's Special 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.

Note: Exceptions apply only in relation to fee charging post primary schools, the boarding element in Boarding Schools and admission to post leaving cert or further education courses run by post-primary schools.

17. Arrangements regarding students not attending religious instruction

This section must be completed by schools that provide religious instruction to students.

The following are the school's arrangements for students, where the parents have requested that the student attend the school without attending religious instruction in the school. These arrangements will not result in a reduction in the school day of such students.

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.

St. Declan's School is a Roman Catholic co-educational school under the patronage of the Archbishop of Dublin and the trusteeship of the Irish Jesuits. Our school seeks to be a place of genuine Christian spirit where each individual is treated with the highest respect. Bearing in mind the Catholic ethos of the school, every effort is made to ensure the school is as inclusive as possible. While Catholic education and the ethos of the school permeate the day, children of other faiths or none will not be required to attend formal religious instruction classes. However the staff of the school will continue to develop the religious education of all children in a spiritual, moral and holistic manner.

18. Reviews/appeals

Review of decisions by the Board of Management

The parent/guardian of the student, may request the board of management to review a decision to refuse admission. Such requests must be made in accordance with Section 29C of the Education Act 1998. All requests to appeal a decision of refusal to the school must be appealed within three (3) weeks of notification of refusal.

The board of management 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 oversubscribed, 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 oversubscribed, 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 of 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 oversubscribed.

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 oversubscribed, 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 oversubscribed, 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 which are published on the website of the Department of Education and Skills.