



ST. DECLAN'S SCHOOL ENROLMENT AND PARTICIPATION POLICY

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Reviewed October 2018

Introduction

1. This Admissions Policy has been formulated in accordance with the provisions of the Education Act 1998, as amended, in order to assist parents in relation to enrolment matters. 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 which caters for children with special needs from 4 to 12 years of age who, because of mild emotional and/or behavioural difficulties, are unable to benefit from mainstream schooling. These difficulties must be the primary cause for enrolment in the school. While the pupils come from all religious backgrounds and all religions are enrolled without discrimination, the ethos of the school is Roman Catholic.
2. The quality of education on offer at St. Declan's is characterised by the professional dedication of all staff and by the creation of a caring environment within the school. Our school seeks to be a place of genuine Christian spirit where each individual is treated with the highest respect.
3. 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 nor to attend specifically Catholic liturgies. As far as is possible, suitable alternative arrangements will be made in order to facilitate this. It will not be possible, however, to provide religious instruction in other faiths.
4. Children at St. Declan's receive a tailored, time-limited, intervention in small class settings which aims to assist children in coping with and/or helping them to regulate their response to their presenting difficulties. Based on places available we offer suitable candidates a one to three year's placement in St. Declan's (subject to a yearly review). Depending on the needs of the child and the specific resources available within the school to meet those needs this placement may be extended for a second year or a third year. Suitability for



continued enrolment in the school will be assessed on an ongoing basis, as appropriate. The placement in St. Declan's is intended as a support to the child in enabling him or her to enter or re-enter mainstream schooling and therefore, enrolment in St. Declan's being time limited, should form part of an overall educational plan for the child.

5. Best practice requires an integrated assessment of an applicant for a place in St. Declan's. This will involve an assessment of intellectual, social and emotional functioning in order to determine the appropriateness of an educational placement at St. Declan's and this assessment forms a core part of the procedures for enrolment set out below.
6. **Criteria for consideration:**
 - o Applicants for a place in St. Declan's who fulfil the following criteria qualify for consideration for a placement in the school subject to yearly review:
 - Children 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.
7. In respect of each qualifying applicant for enrolment, the following will be taken into account in taking the decision as to whether a place will be offered:
 - o The specific educational needs of the applicant with regard to the extent of their emotional and/or behavioural disturbance.
 - o The capacity of resources at St. Declan's to assist the applicant in meeting his or her potential and facilitate a return to mainstream education following placement.
 - o The capacity of the resources at St. Declan's to meet parental expectations regarding educational and other outcomes for their child.
 - o The availability of a vacancy in the school.
8. Every application for a place must be supported by professional reports from relevant psychiatrists and/or psychologists and social workers and, where



appropriate, by a multi-disciplinary team assessment. All available reports must be submitted with the application and the Board of Management reserves the right to request any additional report which, in the view of the Board of Management, would assist it form a view on the application for a place.

9. As outlined in the Equal Status Act, no child who otherwise meets the criteria for admission is refused admission by reason of ethnicity, disability, language/accent, gender, traveller status, asylum-seeker/refugee status, religious/political beliefs and values and/or family or social circumstances.
10. Children enrolled in St. Declan's and their parents and guardians are required to cooperate with and support the school's code of behaviour as well as all other school policies. Parents and guardians are responsible for ensuring that their children cooperate with these policies in an age-appropriate way.
11. All enrolment decisions are taken by the Board of Management of St. Declan's following advice received from the Enrolment Committee. Normally applications are processed during the academic year and prior to the end of June in any given year with a view to enrolment taking place at the beginning of the next academic year. To facilitate children who may need to move school within the academic year, applicants will be considered throughout the year. Enrolment otherwise than at the commencement of the school year will be regarded as exceptional and only should a vacancy have arisen in the school during the course of the school year.
12. In the event of the Board of Management determining that the number of children who meet the criteria for enrolment and in respect of whom a place should be offered exceed the number of places available, priority will be determined on the basis of places being available at a child's age/class level. Parents or those making the referral may still wish to make an application.
13. **The Enrolment Committee**
 - o The Enrolment Committee is appointed annually by the Board of Management and consists of the Principal Deputy Principal and one external assessor with the relevant qualification, The Committee using their professional knowledge and experience will form an opinion in respect of each application and will make a recommendation regarding suitability of placement to the Board of Management who will then decide whether to offer a place to the applicant in question.

14. **Application**



- o Initial screening of reports and other information regarding the applicant will be done by the enrolment committee to ascertain whether or not the child meets the above criteria. Parents will be advised by letter whether their child meets the above criteria and the enrolment committee may seek further clarification before proceeding with the formal application process.
 - o Parents, guardians or other referral source will then be provided with an application form, the enrolment policy, the school's code of behaviour and any other information deemed relevant by the Board of Management. Additional information is available on the school's website www.stdeclans.ie.
 - o Applications for enrolment for the following academic year should be made as early as possible in the school year in order to enable application be made to the National Council for Special Education for any additional resources required (i.e. school transport) and in order to give parents adequate time to find an alternative placement, should the application be unsuccessful.
- Applications cannot generally be processed during July and August.

15. Applications should be accompanied by:

- A completed application form
- Evidence of cognitive functioning. This requires a cognitive psychological assessment or indicative measures from the applicant's current school such as the Non-Reading Intelligence Test or Cognitive Abilities Test (which test will have been conducted within two years of the date of application)

and

- A report from a clinical psychologist or psychiatrist which provides a professional opinion to the effect that the applicant has a diagnosed Emotional and/or Behavioural Disorder (conditions which come under this heading include depression, anxiety, attention deficit disorder and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, which list is not intended to be exclusive)

Or

- A report from a National Educational Psychological Service psychologist or other educational psychologist which states that the applicant has significant and persistent Emotional and/or Behavioural Difficulties

- The report must contain supporting evidence of these difficulties and record the opinion that the difficulties are impairing the applicant's socialisation and/or learning in school.
- Any additional available professional reports such as speech and language therapy reports, occupational therapy reports or reports from social workers should be included.

16. Processing of applications

- o Prospective parents and guardians may visit the school during school hours by prior arrangement (as may relevant health and educational professionals). We recommend this as it will help decide whether to proceed with an application. On this visit, there is usually an opportunity to meet the School Principal and to see the facilities on offer at the school.
- On receipt of an application, a letter of acknowledgment will be sent to the applicant's parents/guardian and to the Principal of the applicant's current school. The Principal of that school will be contacted and asked to furnish a *pro-forma* report on the child's progress at school and to give an undertaking that the child can be re-enrolled in that school following temporary placement in St. Declan's.
- All professional reports are considered by the enrolment committee and the applicant child's needs are discussed. A decision is then made as to whether or not to recommend to the Board of Management that a place be offered. Parents/guardians, the school principal (and the referring agency if appropriate) are informed of the Board's decision in writing.
- If a decision is made that the applicant child does not meet the criteria for enrolment and/or would not be best served by a placement in St. Declan's and/or a place is not available for the applicant, a letter is sent informing parents/guardians and the current School's Principal that the child has not been offered a place and the reasons for the failure to offer such a place.
- In line with Section 28 of the Education Act 1998, as amended, parents who are dissatisfied with an enrolment decision may appeal to the Board of Management. This appeal must be addressed in writing to the Chairperson of the Board stating the ground for the appeal and lodged within ten days of receiving the refusal. Parents, if unhappy with the result of this appeal, may appeal to the Department of Education and Skills under Section 29 of the Education Act on the official form provided by the Department.

- Appeal forms will be provided by the school. This appeal must be lodged within 42 days of receipt of the refusal of a place.
- Once a place at St. Declan's has been offered and accepted in writing, the Principal along with the parents will make an application to the National Council for Special Education seeking approval for transport arrangements and other appropriate supports. This process may take a number of weeks.
- As soon as this approval is received and a place is available, the starting date will be set which, in the majority of cases, will be the start of the school year in the following September.
- If there are any queries or concerns about an application, contact should be made with the School Principal who will endeavour to provide such further details as are appropriate at the time.
- As is made clear in this policy, placement in St. Declan's is initially for a period of one academic year with the possibility of that being extended for up to three years. At the IEP meeting in the first year of placement a plan will be put in place to facilitate a smooth transition back to the mainstream setting from where the applicant for a place has come which return is anticipated will be at the start of the following school year. If a placement is to be continued for a second year or a third year, such process will take place at the appropriate time. The decision as to when a child is ready to reintegrate back to a mainstream setting is made by the teaching professionals in school, in consultation with parents and aided by an appropriate measurement tool such as the reintegration readiness scale.
- In the case of transition to second level or if parents consider a different or other specialised placement more appropriate it is the parents' responsibility (with the assistance of their Special Education Needs Officer or Education Welfare Officer) to seek such placement for the child.

17. Behaviour

- o Continued enrolment at St. Declan's is dependent upon the school being able to meet the educational requirements of the pupil enrolled in the school. If, whether due to behavioural difficulties or otherwise, the Board of Management forms the view that the school is unable to offer an appropriate education to the child, as is its obligation pursuant to the provisions of the Education Act 1998, the Board of Management will be required to take a decision accordingly. In such circumstances this decision may result in the child being excluded from the school.



18. Implementation/Ratification and Review

Originally ratified by the Board of Management of St. Declans School Dated this 13th day of June 2016

Signed: _____

Chairperson of the Board of Management

Date:

