



Admission Policy of St Joseph's National School Derrywash

School Address: Derrywash, Castlebar, Co Mayo F23T659

Roll Number: 13152U

School Patron: Archbishop of Tuam

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.

The policy was approved by the school patron on 25/09/2020. 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 Joseph's NS Derrywash 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

Derrywash National School is a Catholic co-educational primary school with one Special Class for children with ASD, with a Catholic ethos under the patronage of the Bishop of Tuam

"Catholic Ethos" in the context of a Catholic primary school means the ethos and characteristic spirit of the Roman Catholic Church, which aims at promoting:

- the full and harmonious development of all aspects of the person of the pupil, a living relationship with God and with other people
- including the intellectual, physical, cultural, moral and spiritual aspects
- a philosophy of life inspired by belief in God and in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus
- the formation of the pupils in the Catholic faith

- and which school provides religious education for the pupils in accordance with the doctrines, practices and traditions of the Roman Catholic Church, and/or such ethos and/or characteristic spirit as may be determined or interpreted from time to time by the Irish Episcopal Conference

In accordance with S.15 (2) (b) of the Education Act, 1998 the Board of Management of St. Joseph's Primary 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.

This policy is linked to other relevant policies within the school and in particular our Code of Discipline.

Mission Statement

St Joseph's is a Catholic School, respecting other beliefs.

We offer a holistic education so that each child will emerge as self-reliant and confident.

We hope to achieve this through the collaborative effort of teachers, children, parents and the wider community.

Our School Ethos

Our school is a Catholic School with a Catholic Ethos. Non Catholic pupils attending our school are respectfully given the freedom to adhere to their own beliefs and practices.

Our Aim is to create an environment where each child is valued as a person and is provided with a variety of opportunities enabling them to live as a child and developing all aspects of the person; spiritual, emotional, moral, social, intellectual, cultural and physical.

We seek to develop in the child a positive self-image and a respectful caring attitude towards others.

We encourage each child to take an active part in her own development on all levels so that they can:

- enjoy being at school and contribute to making school life a good experience for all.
- be ready and able to benefit from second level education.
- go on to take their place in society as a happy fulfilled and responsible adult.

Since teaching/learning is a collaborative effort we involve parents, teachers, pupils and the wider community.

We endeavour to challenge the gifted child and to give special support, care and attention to children with any level of additional needs.

St Joseph's has 1 Special Class for children with a diagnosis of Autism. This class was established under the auspices of the DES. The Special Class strives to create a supportive and caring environment for each individual pupil. Families of students are encouraged to participate in the development of their child's learning. The aim is to enable each child to attain his/her educational potential and fulfil his/her role in society.

3. Admission Statement

St Joseph's will not discriminate in its admission of a student to the school on any of the following:

- the gender of the student or the applicant in respect of the student concerned

- the civil status of the student or the applicant in respect of the student concerned
- the family status of the student or the applicant in respect of the student concerned
- the sexual orientation of the student or the applicant in respect of the student concerned
- the religion of the student or the applicant in respect of the student concerned
- the disability of the student or the applicant in respect of the student concerned
- the race of the student or the applicant in respect of the student concerned
- if the student or the applicant in respect of the student is part of the Traveller community , or
- if 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.

St Joseph's is a school whose objective is to provide education in an environment which promotes certain values and does not discriminate in relation to the admission of a student who has applied for a place in the school in accordance with section 7A of the Equal Status Act 2000.

St Joseph's is a Catholic school and may refuse to admit as a student a person who is not of the Catholic faith where it is proved that the refusal is essential to maintain the ethos of the school.

St Joseph's is a school which has established 1 Special Class, with the approval of the Minister for Education and Skills, which provides an education exclusively for students with a category or categories of special educational needs specified by the Minister and may refuse to admit to the class a student who does not have the category of needs specified. Our Special class requires a diagnosis of an ASD and a recommendation.

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

AUTISTIC SPECTRUM DISORDER (ASD) CLASS

St Joseph's with the approval of the Minister for Education and Skills, has established a class to provide an education exclusively for students with autism.

It is essential to clearly ascertain that placement in an ASD class within a mainstream school is appropriate for the applicant. It is also necessary to ensure that the school is in a position to cater for the needs of the applicant. The needs and rights of other members of the ASD class and the school community in general must also be considered when assessing applications for enrolment.

In order to be allocated a place in the ASD class, the applicant must fulfil the following criteria:

1. The applicant must have a diagnosis of Autism/ Autistic Spectrum Disorder made using the DSM-IV or ICD 10 by a psychologist or multi-disciplinary team.
2. If a child also presents with a general learning disability, it must fall within the mild range or above, (this diagnosis must also be made using a professionally recognised

clinical and psychological assessment procedure.) The reason for this is that firstly, in order to benefit from a placement in a mainstream school, children need to be capable of accessing the Primary School Curriculum. Secondly, as a mainstream school, we do not have the facilities to cater for the needs of children with moderate or profound learning disabilities.

3. The school must be in a position to provide for the needs of the applicant. It is necessary that the level of needs and care required by each child will be clearly defined. In order to ascertain this the following steps may be taken:

a. Parents must provide the school with all relevant professional reports. Where necessary, contact will be made with the relevant psychologists, therapists or members of ASD team to clarify any outstanding matters regarding assessment.

b. The parents of a child being offered a place in the class may be invited to visit the school to meet with a member of the Special Ed. Team and the Principal of the School. Any information requested by the parents will be provided at this meeting.

c. The parents may be requested by the school to consent to a visit by the Special Education Team to a child's pre-school/ school/home setting to observe the child.

4. There must be a recommendation by the relevant professionals that a special class placement in a mainstream school is both necessary and suitable for the applicant. In this respect, the behaviour of children applying for enrolment must also be considered. It is accepted that Children with Special Educational Needs may display difficult, defiant or oppositional behaviours. However, where behavioural issues are likely to result in danger to the applicant or other children or where behaviour issues are likely to negatively impact other children's constitutional right to an education, placement in the ASD class may not be suitable.

5. Children must be of primary school age to qualify for a place in the class.

6. The individual needs of each child are constantly reviewed to ensure that the ASD class is the appropriate setting to meet the needs of the child. Reviews will be carried out in consultation with the parents, SENO, psychologist and all relevant health care professionals.

Application Process for ASD Class

1. When a place in the ASD class is advertised on the school's annual Admissions Notice, an Enrolment Application Form provided by the school should be filled out by the parents/ guardians on behalf of the child they wish to enrol.

2. This form should be accompanied by an original birth certificate.

3. A recent psychological assessment or report from a multi-disciplinary team should be provided with the application. Any other reports in operation on a child should also be provided to the school for assessment by the Admissions Team.

4. The school's Admission Team will examine each application to assess the suitability of the placement for the applicant in relation to the criteria outlined above. The team will include the School Principal and the Special Class Teacher. The team will be supported by the Senior Management team.

5. Once the assessment process has been completed, a recommendation will be made in relation to each application to the Board of Management of the school. The B.O.M. has the right to endorse or overrule any decision made by the Admissions Team. 6. The Principal will undertake to communicate to the parent / guardian the decision of the Admissions Team and Board of Management.

MAINSTREAM WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

Some children may require the support of a Special Education Teacher, Support Teacher, Language Support Teacher and/or Special Needs Assistant (SNA). This will be determined by the Board of Management on review of the application form and reports submitted by the applicant parents/guardians. All children in mainstream classes are required to be able to toilet independently save where a medical report cites an underlying medical condition.

5. Admission of Students

This school shall admit each student seeking admission except where –

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

St Joseph's is a Catholic school and may refuse to admit as a student a person who is not of the Catholic faith where it is proved that the refusal is essential to maintain the ethos of the school.

Note for Parents: the inclusion of the above wording was mandated by the Education (Admission to Schools) Act 2018.

The special class attached to St Joseph's provides an education exclusively for students (boys and girls) with an ASD and the school may refuse admission to this class, where the student concerned does not have the specified category of special educational needs provided for in this class.

6. a) Oversubscription to Mainstream Classes

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:

1. Children who are 4 years of age on or before the 1st day of April and who have siblings currently enrolled in the school (including step siblings and foster siblings).
2. Children who are 4 years of age on or before the 1st day of April and who qualify as a resident of our catchment area (5km radius from our school).
3. Children who are 4 years of age on or before the 1st day of April and who are children of past pupils.

4. Children living outside the catchment area and who have completed the 2 year preschool curriculum.
5. Random selection, independently verified.

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:

1. Older children will have precedence, ie Date of Birth.
2. Draw lots.

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 relation to:

- admission to our 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) 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 31st January 2025 only).

8. Decisions on applications

All decisions on applications for admission to St Joseph's 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 14 below in relation to applications received outside of the admissions period and section 15 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, 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.

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 Joseph's, 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 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 Joseph'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 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.

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—

- (i) an application for admission to the school has been received,
- (ii) an offer of admission to the school has been made, or
- (iii) 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. 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 Joseph's 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 Joseph's 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 waiting list in order of the date of receipt of the application.

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 a place available. In the event that there 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: In the interests of the continuity of student education, it is the policy of the Board of Management of St Joseph's National School to discourage transfer of students from other schools, other than in certain exceptional circumstances. It is a matter for the Board of Management to determine if such 'exceptional circumstances' exist. Parents of the applicant must complete a 'School Transfer Application Form.' The reason(s) for requesting a transfer must be stated clearly on the Transfer Application Form.

The Board of Management will issue a reply to this application within 21 days of receipt of same. Applications for enrolment under this category will be assessed by referring to the following criteria:

1. Is the transfer in the best interest of the applicant?
2. Is the transfer in the best interest of the students/staff of St Joseph's National School?
3. Is the transfer of educational benefit to the applicant?
4. Is the application accompanied by all relevant information from the applicant's parents/guardians?

When considering applications, the Board must also have regard for the relevant D.E.S. guidelines in relation to class size and/or staffing provisions together with any other requirements concerning physical space and the health, safety and wellbeing of the children. This requires balanced judgements, acting in the best interest of all children. The Board reserves the right to refuse an application for transfer to the school, and to

determine the maximum number of children in each separate classroom bearing in mind

- The available space in each classroom
- The educational needs of children of a particular age
- The educational needs of the applicant
- The presence of pupils with special educational/behavioural needs
- The question of multi-grade classes
- The prevailing Pupil-Teacher Ratio as per DES (currently 26:1)

Parents of children seeking a transfer to any class (including Junior Infants after 30th September) are expected to visit the school to complete a Transfer Application Form. The documentation required is as listed above, together with recent school reports and any assessment reports. The school may contact the child's current school to seek additional information.

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 School Transfer Process outlined above can take place at any time during the school year.

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

The board of St Josephs 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. Arrangements regarding students not attending religious instruction

The following are the school's arrangements for students, where the parents have requested that the student attend the school without attending religious instruction. 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.

Prior to religious occasions parents/guardians will be contacted to ascertain if or not they wish their child to attend the religious events arising from an existing list of pupils in this regard. Alternative classes will be offered for these pupils by a teacher.

18. Reviews/appeals

Review of decisions by the board of Management

The parents/guardians of the student, 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 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 parents/guardians 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.

The policy was ratified by the Board of Management of School name on Date.

Signed: _____

Michael O'Malley, Chairperson, Board of Management

Signed: _____

Aishling McDonnell, Principal.

The contents of this policy have been sent to the Tuam diocesan office acting on behalf of the Patron, for approval.