



# St Francis National School

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## Admissions and Enrolment Policy

### 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 the parents of children attending the school.

The policy was approved by the school patron on 18<sup>th</sup> August 2020. It is published on the school's website and will be made available in hardcopy, on request.

The relevant dates and timelines for St Francis NS's 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.

### 2. Characteristic Spirit & General Objectives of the School

St. Francis NS is a vibrant, friendly and welcoming school that values trust and openness in a safe learning environment. St Francis NS supports the principles of inclusiveness, equality of access and of participation in school life, with respect for diversity of tradition, values, beliefs, languages and ways of life in society, whilst working within the context of the Rules and Regulations of the Department of Education and Skills.

## **Ethos**

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

### **3. Admission Statement**

St. Francis NS will not discriminate in its admission of a pupil to the school on any of the following grounds:

- a) gender of the pupil or the applicant in respect of the pupil concerned,
- b) the civil status of the pupil or the applicant in respect of the pupil concerned,
- c) family status of the pupil or the applicant in respect of the pupil concerned,
- d) sexual orientation of the pupil or the applicant in respect of the pupil concerned,
- e) religion of the pupil or the applicant in respect of the pupil concerned,
- f) the disability of the pupil or the applicant in respect of the pupil concerned,
- g) race of the pupil or the applicant in respect of the pupil concerned,
- h) membership of the Traveller Community by the pupil or the applicant in respect of the pupil concerned, or
- i) the pupil or the applicant in respect of the pupil concerned has special educational needs (see extra information below)

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.

### **4. Categories of Special Educational Needs catered for in the school/special class (effective Feb 2021)**

St. Francis NS, with the approval of the Minister for Education and Skills, has established one class to provide an education exclusively for students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) commencing September 2021. Enrolment in the class is irrespective of age and/or cognitive ability. The class will be co-educational and will cater for children of primary school age only – i.e. four years to thirteen years.

All applications which have been received on or before 14<sup>th</sup> February in the year of enrolment will be considered for first round offers.

The application will undergo assessment by the Admission Team (The admission team is made up of the Principal Mrs. Lawless, Deputy Principal Mrs. O'Rourke, the ASD coordinator and a member of the SET team) to ensure that the application fulfills the enrolment criteria outlined in this policy.

The Department of Education & Skills states that the ratio for each class is a maximum **six** pupils to one teacher and two SNAs. There must be more than three pupils to access the second SNA.

### **Criteria for enrolment in the Special Class for children with Autism:**

The maximum class size in each special class is **six** pupils.

The Board of Management reserves the right to enroll less than this if it is deemed in the best interests of the class, the children and the school.

In order for a child to be enrolled in the class for Autism, a place must be available and he/she must **fully** fulfil the following criteria:-

- A full psychological assessment specifying Autism by a clinical /educational psychologist or psychiatrist, with a recommendation of placement in an ASD specific class. This report should be recent, within the last 24 months, and **MUST** include the results of a DSM-5 or ICD 10 assessment.
- Application Form – fully completed, including the relevant Psychological Report dated within the last 24 months.
- A multi-disciplinary report is also valuable, and should be presented to the school at the earliest possible date.

**If the number of children on the list of applicants to enroll exceeds the number of places available, the following criteria will apply in priority order, beginning with number one – subject to meeting all the criteria and completing all the procedures outlined in this policy.**

1. Children currently in a mainstream class in St. Francis NS for whom enrolment in an autism class is deemed a more suitable learning environment – priority to the eldest;
2. Children who have a parent/grandparent who is a staff member - priority to the eldest;
3. Siblings/step-siblings currently enrolled in the school or who have attended the school in the past - priority to the eldest;
4. Children currently attending an ASD Early Intervention class for whom enrolment in an autism class is deemed a more suitable learning environment and who live **within** the catchment area of Haggardstown & Blackrock - priority to the eldest;
5. Children currently attending an ASD Early Intervention class for whom enrolment in an autism class is deemed a more suitable learning environment and who live **outside** the catchment area of Haggardstown /Blackrock - priority to the eldest;
6. Children residing in the catchment area of Haggardstown/Blackrock - priority to the eldest;
7. Children residing outside the Haggardstown/Blackrock catchment area - priority to the eldest.
8. Suitability of the learning environment for placement of children
9. The child nearest the school by road journey as defined on Google Maps.

**An offer of a place must be accepted in writing within two weeks from date of receipt of the offer.**

## **Inclusion**

The Board of Management will not refuse a child on the basis of Ethnicity, disability, (i.e. severity of Autism diagnosis) traveler status, refugee status, political beliefs or family or social circumstances, provided they fulfil the enrolment criteria.

Enrolment is not necessarily ensured if:

- Necessary resources pertaining to the enrolment are not available
- Sufficient classroom space is not available
- The Admission Team decide that the school is unable to adequately meet the needs of the child

Taking all of the above into account, and based on the advice of the Admission Team for the special classes, the Board of Management reserves the right of admission.

## **Health Board Input**

Essential services are to be provided by the Health Service Executive. These services include Speech and Language therapy, Occupational therapy and Sensory activities.

When a place becomes available the parents and principal/deputy principal will complete the 'Notification to NCSE of enrolment in a special class' this is **Form 7** available on [www.ncse.ie](http://www.ncse.ie)

A school registration form, including family details and medical history is completed on enrolment for children who have secured a place.

The Admissions Policy states that the parents/guardians (and the prospective candidates for the class if required) may be invited to meet the principal, the class teacher and any other relevant parties before the child starts school. An induction meeting of new parents will be held prior to commencement in the school, as with all pupils.

In accordance with section 23(4) of the Education (Welfare) Act a parent/guardian must confirm compliance with the school's Code of Behaviour. The Board of Management reserves the right to refuse enrolment if this confirmation is not received prior to the pupil attending the school. The Board also reserves the right to continue to suspend or expel a child under 'Health & Safety' regulations and in conjunction with the school 'Code of Behaviour' as per the National Education Welfare document if the need should arise.

A placement breakdown can sometimes occur. All placements are subject to review at the request of the parents and/ or the school. The review will include input from all agencies involved (through a multi-disciplinary team meeting), the parents/guardians and the school. Following the review, a recommendation may be made that the child be enrolled in a school that can better meet his/her needs.

First preference will be given to pupils attending St. Francis NS, where a transfer will take place from mainstream to special class if criteria have been satisfied.

Integration will be determined based on the individual needs of the child, and through discussion with the parents/guardians and the relevant class/support teacher. Following agreement, phased integration will take place in the appropriate class.

## **5. Admission of Pupils**

This school shall admit each pupil seeking admission except where –

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

## **6. Oversubscription**

In the event that the school is oversubscribed, the following selection criteria will strictly apply to those applications that are received within the timeline for receipt of applications as set out in the school's Annual Admission Notice in the order below:

- a. Children who have reached their 4th birthday by March 31st in the year of admission.
- b. Children/ Grandchildren of staff members
- c. Siblings/step-siblings of children already enrolled in the school or who have attended the school in the past. Such places will be allocated on the basis of age
- d. The remaining places will be offered to qualifying applicants by date of birth (priority to oldest) to the child nearest the school by road journey as defined on Google Maps.
- e. The child nearest the school by road journey as defined on Google Maps

In the event that there are two or more pupils tied for a place or places in any of the selection criteria categories above (the number of applicants exceeds the number of remaining places), priority will be given to the child nearest the school by road journey as defined on Google Maps.

## **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 pupil on a waiting list for admission to the school:

- a. a pupil's prior attendance at a pre-school or pre-school service, including naíonraí, other than in relation to admission to a special class, a pupil's prior attendance at –
  - (1) an early intervention class, or

- (2) an early start pre-school, specified in a list published by the Minister from time to time; the payment of fees or contributions (howsoever described) to the school;
- b. a pupil's academic ability, skills or aptitude; other than in relation to admission to a special class insofar as it is necessary in order to ascertain whether or not the pupil has the category of special educational needs concerned
- c. pupil's parents;
- d. a pupil's connection to the school by virtue of a member of his or her family attending or having previously attended the school; (other than, (1) siblings of a pupil attending or having attended the school and/or (2) parents or grandparents of a pupil having attended the school. (a school may only apply criteria (2) to a maximum of 25% of the available spaces as set out in the school's annual admission notice).
- e. 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 Francis NS will be based on the following:

- Our school's admission policy
- The school's annual admission notice
- 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 pupil 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 pupil's ranking against the selection criteria and details of the pupil'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**

**An offer of a place must be accepted in writing within two weeks from date of receipt of the offer.**

In accepting an offer of admission from St. Francis NS, you must indicate—

- a. 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
- b. 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 Francis NS where—

- a. it is established that information contained in the application is false or misleading.
- b. 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.
- c. the parent of a pupil, 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 pupil;
- d. 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 Act 2018 (Admission to Schools) allows for the sharing of certain information between schools in order to facilitate the efficient admission of pupils.

## **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 pupils whose applications for admission to St. Francis NS 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. Francis NS is in the order of priority assigned to the pupils' applications after the school has applied the selection criteria in accordance with this admission policy.

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 pupils on the waiting list, in accordance with the order of priority in relation to which the pupils 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.

#### **15. Procedures for Admission of Pupils to Other Years and During the School Year**

The procedures of the school in relation to the admission of pupils who are not already admitted to the school to classes other than junior infants are as follows: Places will be offered provided there is space available and taking into consideration Department of Education and Skills guidelines in relation to class size and/or staffing provisions.

- The Board of Management of St. Francis NS has capped class size at 30 pupils from the 2018 Junior Infants intake
- The educational needs of children, including the presence of children with special education/behavioural needs
- The parameters of the schools Health & Safety Policy e.g. The size of available physical space in classrooms
- The existence of multi-grade classes

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

##### **Pupils transferring**

1. Children newly resident in the school catchment area

Subject to availability of a place, such pupils may be enrolled during the school year if newly resident in the school catchment area.

2. Children resident in the school catchment area

and attending another school within the parish/area - Transfers not involving a change of address will be assessed on an individual basis and may only be considered at the end of a school term.

3. Children resident outside the catchment area

and attending school outside the catchment area - subject to the availability of a place a transfer will only be considered at the end of a school term.

Any available places will be offered in strict accordance with this school's enrolment policy.

## **16. Declaration in Relation to The Non-Charging of Fees**

The board of Management of St Francis NS 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 pupil to the school, or
- b) the admission or continued enrolment of a pupil in the school.

## **17. Arrangements Regarding Pupils Not Attending Religious Instruction**

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

A written request should be made to the principal of the school. A consultation will then be arranged with the parent(s)/ guardians of the pupil to discuss how the request may be accommodated by the school.

Parents should be aware that prayer, etc. happen incidentally throughout the day but that child/ren not doing RE are not expected to participate.

## **18. Reviews / Appeals**

### **Review of decisions by the Board of Management**

The parent of the pupil 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. All relevant information will be scanned and held on file in compliance with GDPR.

### **Right of Appeal**

Under Section 29 of the Education Act 1998, the parent of the pupil 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.

### **Appeals Procedure**

Parents who are dissatisfied with an enrolment decision, may appeal to the Board of Management. The appeal must be addressed, in writing, to the Chairperson of the Board, stating the grounds 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. This appeal must be lodged within 42 days of receipt of the refusal from the school to enrol.

### **Responsibility for Review:**

All members of staff, Parents Association, BoM.

### **Timeframe for Review:**

This policy will be reviewed every 4 years

**Next review:** June 2024

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## **Admission and Enrolment Policy**

Ratified by the Board of Management on \_\_\_\_\_ (Date)

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ (Chairperson, Board of Management)