



St Joseph's Special School

Enrolment and Participation Policy

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Introduction

This policy (originally entitled Enrolment/ Admissions) was drafted in 2003, updated in 2006 and reviewed in October 2011. The Board of Management reviewed it again in April 2016 and substantially revised it.

Category

St. Joseph's is a special primary school which caters for pupils between the ages of four and eighteen years with moderate general learning disabilities. The school has been allocated five teachers for children with autism within this range. Further staff allocation has been approved for pupils with multiple difficulties. In general pupils with autism are integrated throughout the school. However, in exceptional circumstances autism specific classes can be set up if this is deemed by the multi-disciplinary team to be the most effective option. The school is in the Galway diocese and under the patronage of Ability West and is managed by a school Board of Management.

Enrolment

St. Joseph's had a total of 70 pupils on roll in September 2015.

Philosophy

The Board of Management is setting out its' policy on enrolment procedures in accordance with the provisions of the Education Act 1998 and trusts by so doing parents will be assisted in relation to enrolment matters. Furthermore, the chairperson of the Board of Management and the principal will be happy to clarify any further matters arising from this policy.

Current Provision

The school consists of twelve classes. The junior school consists of six classes Junior 1 - Junior 6 and the senior school also consists of six classes - Senior 1-Senior 6.

Pupil/Teacher ratios are as follows:

Moderate GLD: 8:1

ASD: 6:1

Multiple Disabilities: 6:1

The school operates from 9.05am - 2.45pm. An infant day (9.05-1.15) operates for pupils aged 4 and 5 as per mainstream schools. As transport is not provided for the infant day, parents/guardians will be required to collect these pupils.

Enrolment Procedures

Parents contact the school in person, in writing or by telephone with an expression of interest in having their child enrolled. The school also accepts expressions of interest and referrals from the following on behalf of parents:

- Early Intervention Networks
- Woodlands Development Centre, Renmore and its' associated psychologists.
- Community Care, Shantalla. (HSE)
- Ability West Psychology Department

An Invitation for Referrals (Appendix A) and a Summary of Needs Form (Appendix B) issues to the above personnel.

Parents are invited to visit the school and visit the appropriate classroom. Following this, should they wish to have their child considered for enrolment, they must complete an Application Form (Appendix C). This form must be completed in full and all requested necessary documentation must be included to be considered for admission. All information provided will be processed as per the Data Protection Policy.

This application form must be returned before the closing date for applications for that particular year of entry. This date is available from the school office. Where application forms are received after that time, the application may be considered as part of the applications process for the following year of entry.

At the discretion of the Board of Management and, on receipt of an application form, exceptions are made for families relocating during the school year.

Places are offered in accordance with our enrolment policy. Parents must accept/reject the offer by the date specified so that a place can be offered to the next suitable applicant on the waiting list.

Places are only offered when parents/guardians have agreed in writing to abide by the school's Code of Behaviour.

The following procedures will apply to all applications for enrolment in the school:

- Parents send a letter/ e-mail or make a telephone request for admission to the school;
- Parents are sent a copy of the Enrolment Policy, the Code of Behaviour and an Application Form;
- Parents are asked to return the following
 - Completed Application Form
 - Full Birth Certificate
 - Proof of Address e.g. utility bill

- Psychological reports
- Any other available professional reports* such as:
 - Speech & Language Therapy Report,
 - Occupational Therapy Report,
 - Social Work Report,
 - Recent School Report
 - Behaviour Guidelines
 - Psychiatric Report
 - Paediatric Report

* Please note that all reports relating to the child which have been created within the past three years must be submitted. Failure to do so may invalidate the application.

- Following receipt of these documents the Admissions Committee comprising of the chairperson of the Board of Management, the principal, the head of Psychology Department and the head of Social Work Department in Ability West will arrange a meeting to determine the allocation of places, as per the criteria as set out below. The Admissions Committee, having considered each application submits the list of names to the Board of Management prior to offering places for their consideration and decision. The Board of Management reserves the right to refuse admission based on the advice of the Admissions Committee and taken into consideration the criteria as outlined below.
- If the board decides to enroll a child, a letter of offer will be sent to parents along with application forms for transport and SNA support. This letter of offer will be issued within 21 days of the closing date for applications. The offer will be subject to parents/guardians providing written agreement for their child to adhere to the school's Code of Behaviour. If the board decides not to enroll a child the parents of the child will also be informed within 21 days of the closing date for applications.
- Parents will be requested to respond by a specified date so that the school can meet the NCSE deadlines for applications for school transport and SNA support, if applicable.
- If the child meets the enrolment criteria outlined below but, either the number of applicants has exceeded the vacancies available or, enrolment is refused on any other basis, parents/guardians will be informed that there is currently no place available but will be asked if they wish their child's details to be retained by the school in case of future vacancies. In such a case, 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.
- If the child does not meet the enrolment criteria below 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.

Criteria for Consideration of Applications

Applications for admission to St. Joseph's Special School will only be considered where a child meets all of the following criteria:

- The child is in the moderate cognitive range (as confirmed by an appropriate professional's report included in the child's application) and therefore has the ability to benefit from the education and skills programmes offered in the school.
- The child is in the moderate adaptive range (as confirmed by an appropriate report included in the child's application) and therefore has the ability to benefit from the education and skills programmes offered in the school.
- The application was received by the closing date for applications for that particular year of entry.
- The child is at least 4 years old on the 1st of September of the year of entry.
- At least one of the assessment reports provided is from the last 12 months.
- The child is from the catchment area - County Galway.

If the Admissions Committee considers that a pupil satisfies the enrolment criteria set out above, it will assess the application on the basis of the following criteria.

Criteria for Assessment of Applications

Each application will be assessed on the basis of the following:

- The child will be able to tolerate a classroom environment containing other children.
- The composition, special needs and ages of the pupils currently in the class into which the child would be enrolled.
- The pupil/teacher ratio will be appropriate to the needs of the child.
- The Admissions Committee is satisfied that the overall needs of the child can be met in the school.
- Date of receipt of application.
- There is sufficient physical space in the relevant classroom.

Exceptional Circumstances Warranting Refusal of an Enrolment

Even where the enrolment criteria are met, and where the child would otherwise be eligible for admission, the school reserves the right to refuse enrolment to a pupil in exceptional cases. Such an exceptional case could arise where:

- The child has special needs such that, even with additional resources available from the Department of Education and Science and/or the NCSE, the school cannot meet such needs and/or provide the pupil with an appropriate education.
- The members of the Admissions Committee are reasonably clear from reports and/or teacher observation, that the child poses an unacceptable risk to self or other pupils, to school staff or to school property.
- The child has previously been expelled from St. Joseph's Special School or any other school in circumstances where the Admissions Committee feels that placement in St. Joseph's Special School would not be appropriate for the child.

Appeals Procedure

If parents are unhappy with the decision, they may appeal to the Department of Education and Skills under Section 29 of the Education Act on the official form provided by the department. Parents/guardians will be informed of their right to appeal in the letter of refusal to enroll.

Appeal forms are available to download on the Department of Education and Skills website- www.education.ie. Please note that this appeal must be lodged within 42 days of receipt of the refusal of the final decision of the Board of Management to enrol a child.

This document should be read with reference to the school's Code of Behaviour, Child Protection Policy, School Attendance Strategy, Anti- Bullying Policy, Confidentiality Policy and Data Protection Policy.

The policy is published on school website www.stjosephpschool.com
It will be reviewed annually.

Signed _____

Date _____

Chairperson Board of Management