

Admission Policy of St. Brigid's Special School

School Address: Ard Easmuinn, Dundalk, Co. Louth

Roll number:18772g

School Patron: Archbishop of Armagh

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 18th August 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. Brigid'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. Brigid's Special School is a co-educational special school for children with mild general learning disability ranging in age from four years to eighteen years, with a Catholic ethos under the patronage of the Archbishop of Armagh, welcoming students of all religions and none.

The school promotes the physical, emotional, social, moral, academic and vocational development of each child to enable them to achieve their fullest potential and acquire social and functional skills for independent living. The school is designated by the Department of Education and Skills (DES) as a primary school and follows the Primary School Curriculum (1999) which is modified and differentiated to meet the individual needs of each child. Students of post-primary age participate in the Junior Cycle level 3, Junior Certificate Schools Programme (JCSP), Level 2 Learning Programmes (L2LP) and Level1 programmes. Senior cycle students access Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) level 3 programmes of certification and where appropriate continue to access Junior Cycle L2LP and Level1 programmes. St. Brigid's Special School is dependent on the grants and staffing resources provided by the Department of Education and Science (DES). At all times the school policy must have regard to the resources and funding available. The school operates within the regulations and circulars laid down

from time to time by the DES and National Council for Special Education (NCSE). The school is also subject to the Education Act (1998), the Education Welfare Act (2000), the Education for Persons with Special Education Needs Act (EPSEN, 2004), equality law and all other relevant legislation. Within the context and parameters of the DES regulations and programmes, the rights of the Patron as set out in the Education Act 1998 and the funding and resources available, St. Brigid's Special School supports the principles of:

1. Inclusiveness, particularly with reference to the enrolment of children irrespective of faith or race.
2. Equality of access and participation in the school.
3. Respect for the diversity of values, beliefs, traditions, languages and ways of life in society.

3. Admission Statement

St. Brigid'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.

St. Brigid's Special School is a school which, with the approval of the Minister for Education and Skills, provides an education for students with Mild General Learning Disability, Borderline Mild General Learning Disability with an additional factor, as outlined in Circular 08/99, and in some cases may consider a child who has a General Learning Disability within the higher end of the moderate range, but with adaptive behavioural skills functioning within the mild range and a professional recommendation for our setting and ability to access our curriculum. St Brigid's does not discriminate in relation to the admission of a student who does not have the category of needs specified.

Please note that the fulfilling of the enrolment criteria does not necessarily ensure enrolment if:

1. Sufficient places are not available

Documentation Required for Enrolment

The following documentation must be provided with all requests to enrol a child in St. Brigid's:

- A recent report (within the last 2 years) from an educational/clinical psychologist outlining the child's cognitive ability/learning profile. It should also identify the special educational needs of the child along with the resources (including Special Needs Assistant (SNA) support) that are required to meet these needs. The report should also include a statement that says a special school is an appropriate educational placement for the child

Where available the following reports should also be provided:

- A report from an Occupational Therapist
- A report from a Speech and Language Therapist
- An educational report from the educational setting where the child is currently enrolled
- Other reports that might be deemed necessary in individual cases, e.g. behavioural, psychiatric, medical, audiological, etc.
- Other such information as may be deemed relevant/appropriate (including information as may be prescribed by the Education Welfare Act 2000) as determined by the Board of Management.
- The application form is completely filled out and deemed valid

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

Conditions for Enrolment:

- St. Brigid's Special School with the approval of the Minister for Education and Skills, provides an education exclusively for the following students:
- A child must have an assessment of a mild general learning disability to be considered for enrolment in St. Brigid's School. These are children who achieve an IQ score within the range of 50 – 69 in an assessment of cognitive ability, as confirmed by an appropriate professional's report included in the child's application, which includes a recommendation for Special School for Mild General Learning Disability
- A child with an assessment of a borderline general learning disability (IQ 70 -79) and who has one or more additional factors such as outlined in Circular 08/99 and 08/02(DES) may also be eligible for enrolment.
- In some cases, St. Brigid's may consider the enrolment a child who has a general learning disability within the higher end of the moderate range (IQ 45 – 49) but with adaptive behaviour skills functioning within the mild range and a professional recommendation for our setting and ability to access our curricula.

5. Admission of Students

This school shall admit each student 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
- c) the student concerned does not have the specified category of special educational needs catered for by the school.
- d) Parents/Guardians who provide false or misleading information (e.g. use an address which is not their principal private residence at the time of application) will render their application null and void.

St. Brigid's Special School provides an education exclusively for students with mild general learning disability and may refuse admission to a student, where the student does not have the specified category of special educational needs provided for by this school.

Application Procedure

Before an application is made, parents/guardians should ensure that:

- The child will be 4 years old on or before 1st September of the year in which it is proposed to enrol the child.
- Applications for enrolment will be accepted throughout the school year.
- Parents who wish to enrol their child are required to complete an application from St. Brigid's Special School.
- Applicants will be notified of the school's decision to offer a student a place in line with our Admissions Notice.

The following process will be followed after initial contact has been made with the school.

- The parents/guardians are invited to the school on our open day (usually held in mid February and advertised in local press, on school website and on school facebook page, or by appointment and are informed of the curriculum, facilities, resources, staffing ratios and any other professional services available in St. Brigid's Special School. Attendance at this meeting is not compulsory and will not be taken into account in any offer of places.
- Full consideration of any request for enrolment can only be made after receipt of the psychological assessment report and any other report(s) deemed essential to adequately evaluate the appropriateness of St. Brigid's Special School to the educational needs of the child.
- As part of this evaluation process, a request may be made for the principal and/or teacher from St. Brigid's Special School to observe the child in his/her current educational setting. This is optional and will not be considered in any decision on admission.
- Consultations with other individuals/agencies may also occur, e.g. Special Educational Needs Organiser (SENO), National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS), C6 - 18 Child Development Team, Enable Ireland, TUSLA, principals of previous schools, etc.

Permission will be sought from parents if enquiries are needed from other agencies. Where relevant a meeting will be held with some or all relevant individuals/agencies with significant information in relation to the child.

- The final decisions with regard to enrolment are made by the school principal following review of all available reports, consultation with relevant professionals and consideration of the views and opinions of parents.
- Parents/guardians who wish to accept an offer of a place for their child in the school must do so in line with the school's Admissions Notice. The child's name along with his/her psychological assessment report will be forwarded to the Special Educational Needs Organiser (SENO) for the attention of the NCSE. This may be accompanied by applications for transport to the school and a request for SNA support. Where the Board consider it necessary to have additional supports or resources to meet the educational needs of the child, an application will also be made to the SENO for the attention of the DES.
- Prior to final enrolment the child is also invited to visit the school to stay (without parents/guardians) for a period of time. This process may be repeated until such time as the child feels comfortable and content about transitioning to St. Brigid's Special School on a permanent basis.
- Parents/guardians will be requested to complete the "Enrolment Form" and provide a copy of the child's birth certificate, baptismal certificate (where applicable) as well as medical and other information relevant to the care needs of the child. Parents/guardians will also be provided with a copy of the Code of Behaviour and the Anti - Bullying policy and must sign a statement agreeing that they will make all reasonable efforts to ensure compliance with these policies by their child. Parents/guardians are responsible for ensuring that their child(ren) co-operate(s) with said policies in an age appropriate way.

Children will be prioritised and enrolled based on the following criteria:

1. The school is in a position to offer the appropriate resources to the new admissions.
2. The placement must be age appropriate.
3. The pupil teacher ratio will be appropriate to the needs of the child.
4. Children from within the geographical catchment area of the school – approximately north County Louth and south Monaghan
(proof of address needed)

There will be no deferral, any places declined will be offered to the next eligible student and parents/guardians declining the offer will have to apply again the following year in the normal fashion.

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:

If the number of children applying to enrol exceeds the number of places available, the following criteria will apply in priority order, beginning with:

1. Brothers and sisters of pupils already enrolled in the school.
2. Applicants from within the school's catchment area adhering to NCSE requirements for attending the nearest appropriate special school

Parents/guardians seeking an extension of enrolment for their child who is 18 years of age before the commencement of the new school year are advised of the DES rule 64 (1) of the Rules for National Schools, to cater for children and young persons with special educational needs from the age of 4 until the end of the school year in which they reach their 18th year, in relation to the matter. The student must be following a course leading to a Level 3 accreditation and require the additional year in order to complete this course.

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. A lottery system

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 (a) a special 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, siblings of a student attending or having attended the school)

(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.

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. Brigid's Special 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 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. Brigid'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 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. Brigid'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.

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. Brigid'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. Brigid'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.

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 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:

If applications for enrolment occur during the course of the school year, the waiting list that is established at the start of the year will continue to be in effect, if the waiting list has been exhausted pupils will be admitted by a lottery system.

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

The board of St. Brigid'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.

17. Arrangements regarding students not attending religious instruction

The following are the school's arrangements for students, where the parents or in the case of a student who has reached the age of 18 years, the student, who has 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) or the student, as the case may be, to discuss how the request may be accommodated by the school.

18. Reviews/appeals

Review of decisions by the board of Management

The parent of the student, or in the case of a student who has reached the age of 18 years, 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 parent of the student, or in the case of a student who has reached the age of 18 years, 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.