

Admission policy

Admission Policy of St. Christopher's Special School

School Address: Battery Road Longford

Roll number:19429V

School Patron/s: Executive Committee of St. Christopher's Services

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 10.11.20. 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. Christopher'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. Christopher's Special School is categorised as a Moderate School under the auspices of the Department of Education and skills. It is a nondenominational school under the patronage of the Executive Committee of Longford Association for Persons with an Intellectual Disability.

It is a community where all students are equally valued and respected. It provides a comprehensive education to students with a Moderate General Learning Disability, a Severe/Profound General Learning Disability and students with Autistic Spectrum Disorder within the above two categories.

It fulfills the right of each student to an appropriate and inclusive education, which will;

- Enable them to develop to their full potential as individuals
- Enable them to participate as citizens in society to the best of their ability

General Aims

To promote the spiritual, physical, intellectual, emotional, social, moral and aesthetic development of each pupil in the direction of independent or semi-independent living.

To create a stimulating atmosphere and environment where students feel secure and happy.

To foster a positive relationship between students, staff and parents.

Staff will be encouraged to appreciate that each student is an individual and that he/she deserves to be valued as an individual. Students will be provided with a variety of opportunities towards stimulation and fulfilment to enable progress at his/ her own rate.

To foster a caring, courteous and friendly atmosphere in the school environment, always encouraging positive behaviour.

To select activities which are appropriate for the specific needs and abilities of each student.

To instil self-confidence and self-esteem in our students.

To foster positive social skills in our students and to enable and encourage participation in society to their full potential.

To provide safe and positive learning experiences for our students, ensuring that the guidelines of our Child Protection Policy and Safeguarding Statement are adhered to at all times.

3.Admission Statement

St. Christopher'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 ground of race of the student or the applicant in respect of the student concerned,
 - (g)the Traveller community ground of the student or the applicant in respect of the student concerned,
- or

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.

3.5 St. Christopher's Special School will cooperate with the National Council for Special Education in the performance by the Council of its function under the Education for Persons with Special Needs Act 2004 relating to the provision of education to children with special educational needs, including in particular by the provision and operation of a special class or classes when requested to do so by the Council.

St.Christopher's Special School will comply with any direction served on the patron or the board, as the case may be, under section 37A and any direction served on the board under section 67(4B) of the Education Act.

St. Christopher's Special School is a school which, with the approval of the Minister for Education and Skills, provides an education exclusively for students with a category or categories of special educational needs specified by the Minister.

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

St. Christopher's Special School with the approval of the Minister for Education and Skills, provides an education exclusively for students with Moderate General Learning Disability, a Severe/Profound General Learning Disability and pupils with Autistic Spectrum Disorder within the above two categories.

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.

St. Christopher's Special School provides an education exclusively for students with a Moderate General Learning Disability, a Severe/Profound General Learning Disability and students with Autistic Spectrum

Disorder within the above two categories 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.

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:

Selection Criteria

1. Age of student must be 4yrs -18 years (30th Sept).
2. First preference will be given to students who are resident in the catchment area- County Longford. It will be at the discretion of the Board of Management to decide whether or not to accept for enrolment a student permanently resident outside the County of Longford.
3. Further to the conclusion of initial informal enquiries, all formal applications for enrolment should be supported by a recent psychological profile(not more than a year old) outlining the ascertained level of functioning of the individual child, namely;
 - (a) That the student is functioning within the moderate range of learning disability.
 - (b) That the student is functioning within the severe/profound range of learning disability.
 - (c) That the student with a diagnosis of Autism falls within the range of learning disability of (a) or (b).
 - (d) That her/his learning disability is her/his primary educational need.
 - (e) That the school can meet all the needs of the student.

In exceptional circumstances, a pupil with a mild learning disability may be accepted for enrolment on the recommendation of a Psychologist, Schools' Inspector and ratification by the Board of Management.

4. That appropriate reports are made available from all involved personnel--including a Medical Report and a Birth Certificate.
5. That the School Application Form is completed and returned to the principal along with acceptance of the Code of Behaviour and, where appropriate a Behaviour Management Plan. Receipt of an Application Form will not constitute a decision to enrol the student in question.
6. That approval of the B. O. M. is received.
7. Students will attend school on a trial-basis for a period of three months.

9. Parents/Guardians and relevant personnel are notified in writing by the Principal regarding the decision of the Board of Management. The student shall not be deemed to be enrolled until said notification, in writing, has been furnished.

School's Application Form, Code of Discipline and/or Behaviour Management Plan, which will be made available to the Parent/Guardians with the Application Form itself.

10. Upon enrolment the Student /Parents/Guardians will be required to abide by the School's Application Form, Code of Behaviour and/or Behaviour Management Plan, which will be made available to the Parent/Guardians with the Application Form .

11. School opens at 9.15 a.m. and closes at 3.00 p.m.

Relevant Documentation:-

Psychological Report.

Psychiatric Report (if applicable).

Speech and Language Report.

Social Report.

School Report (With Parental Consent).

Medical Report.

Birth Certificate.

Teacher's Report (if applicable).

*With the exception of the Psychological Report, the documentation listed above will only be accessed with the consent of the parents, and will not be considered as selection criteria in the Admissions process.

All forms must be signed and returned to the Principal.

ADMISSIONS COMMITTEE:

The Board of Management.

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:

Selection Process

The school shall firstly select all applications from:

1. Siblings of present/ past pupils.
2. Children of staff members.
3. Pupils within the catchment area.

If the number of applicants from the catchment area exceeds the remaining places available, a lottery system will apply. The lottery will be chaired by two independent witnesses. Pupils not offered a place will be put on a waiting list.

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) 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. Christopher's Special School 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 15 below in relation to applications received outside of the admissions period and section 16 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. Christopher'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. Christopher'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 Act 2018 allows for the sharing of certain information between schools in order to facilitate the efficient admission of students.

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. Christopher'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. Christopher'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.

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.

15. Procedures for admission of students during the school year

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:

- All applications to transfer into St. Christopher's Special School are treated individually but are subject to:
 - The School's Admission and Enrolment Policies.
 - Acceptance of the Code of Behaviour /Behaviour Management Plan by parents.
 - Exhaustion of the waiting list for the category of need required
 - Meeting the criteria for entry to the school

- Availability of space in the class that caters to their specific category of disability

Placement being recommended/supported by a current Psychological Report

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

The Board of St. Christopher'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:

The work of the school is conducted in an atmosphere of tolerance and respect for religious differences. The needs of all denominations are met through cooperation between students, parents, staff and clergy. The Christian concepts of kindness, caring and respect are promoted by all.

On request, arrangements will be made to facilitate the removal of a student from religious instruction

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.

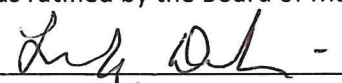
Where an applicant has been refused admission due to the school being oversubscribed, the applicant must request a review (within a three week period of receipt of that decision) by the board of management prior to making an appeal under section 29 of the Education Act 1998. (see Review of decisions 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.

This Policy was ratified by the Board of Management on 11.04.2024

Chairperson 

Principal Sheila Dinneen