

Admissions and Enrolment Policy

St. Paul's School

General Introduction

St. Paul's School (the "School") is a school under the patronage of the Bishop of Cork and Ross and the trusteeship of COPE Foundation (the "Foundation") The denominational character of the school is Roman Catholic. The ethos of the school is Christian in the Catholic tradition. The School has 7 classes for pupils with moderate/severe general learning disabilities and 8 classes for pupils with severe/profound general learning disabilities. Prospective pupils must be at least aged 4 and not older than aged 18 by the last day of August of the year in question. The School caters for 97 pupils in total.

Policy Statement

This admissions and enrolment policy has been formulated pursuant to the provisions of the 1998 Act to assist parents/guardians in relation to admissions and enrolment matters. The Chairperson of the Board or the Principal will be happy to clarify any further matters arising from this policy.

Rationale

In introducing its enrolment policy, the Board of Management of the School is doing so with reference to the rules for National Schools and in accordance with the provision of the Education Act 1998, the Education Welfare Act, 2000, and the Equal Status Act, 2000.

Staff

The School, whose teachers and special needs assistants are funded by the Department of Education and Science, operates within regulations laid down by the Department. School policy is dependent on the resources and funding available. Currently there are 15 class teachers and 35 special needs assistants along with the Principal. The School is supported by a multi-disciplinary team provided by the Foundation from funds provided by the HSE. The level of support varies from year to year subject to available funding and availability of personnel.

Curricula

The School follows the Curriculum Guidelines for Teachers of Pupils with Moderate General Learning Disabilities and the Curriculum Guidelines for Teachers of Pupils with Severe and Profound General Learning Disabilities (2007) provided by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment. Senior classes in the moderate stream of School also follow the Junior Cycle Level 2 Learning Programme 2014. Senior classes in the severe/profound stream of the school will follow the Junior Cycle Level 1 Learning Programme 2014 in 2018.

The website at www.stpaulsspecialschool.com provides additional information about the school.

Governance

The School is governed by a Board of Management (the "Board") that meets regularly and comprises of a chairperson nominated by the Patron, a patron's nominee, the principal, a teacher, two parents/guardians, (one mother and one father) and two members of the wider community.

Length of School Day

Pupils attend from 9.20am to 3.00pm except for reception class pupils of both streams in their first year. The Reception class pupils will be introduced to school on a phased basis. Parents/guardians are asked to collect them at an earlier time (e.g.12.30) for a period agreed between parents, class teacher and principal. If a pupil is using school transport the time will be agreed between the Transport Manager, parents/guardians, class teacher and principal. By the end of their first year in school, the pupil will remain in school until 2pm. Older pupils start on the first day of the new term for a full day.

Funding

The school depends on the grants and teacher resources provided by the Department of Education and Skills and it operates within regulations laid down by the Department. School policy is dependent on resources and funding available. A voluntary contribution is sought from parents twice during the school year to assist the school to provide classroom materials in place of standard text books.

Suspension/Expulsion

In accordance with the terms and conditions laid down by the Educational Welfare Act 2000, Section 23.2, and the school's Health and Safety and Child Protection Policies a child may be suspended or expelled for gross misconduct. (c.f. Code of Discipline). This action will be taken when there is no alternative and according to the regulations of the National Educational Welfare Board.

Please note that the Board has a duty of care to all its existing pupils and staff may not be in a position to continue to facilitate pupils who compromise the entitlement to safety and education of other pupils and staff.

Admission Committee

The School's Admission Committee (the "Committee") comprising of the principal, deputy principal, and at least one member of the multi-disciplinary team, will consider each application for admission and make a recommendation to the Board. The Board makes the final decision with regard to the offering of places to prospective pupils seeking admission. Every effort is made to provide parents/guardians with a speedy response to requests for admission. The Board and the Committee will be guided by the principles of natural justice and will endeavour to be reasonable, fair and transparent.

Application Procedure

- Enquiries in relation to the School and applying for admission to the School may be made by email, letter or telephone.
- A school application form will be forwarded by the school to the parents/guardians for completion on behalf of their child/children along with a copy of the School's Admission and Enrolment Policy.
- Applications for admission for the next School year will be accepted up to 1st March of the preceding School year and must be made by letter or email to the Principal.
- Applications received following that date may not be processed until the following school year if the school is already full.
- Applications are accepted from parents or guardians only.
- Along with the completed application form, the Committee will also require the following enclosures:

- i. An up-to-date psychological assessment (*within 2 years of date of application for under 7 yr. olds; within 4 years of date of application for all others*) stating that the child's primary disability falls within the moderate or severe or profound learning disability category.
- ii. Recommendation for placement in a Special School which caters for pupils with a moderate/severe/profound general learning disability
- iii. an original birth certificate
- iv. disclosure of all pre-existing medical conditions from the pupil's General Practitioner or hospital consultant

This information enables the Committee to assess whether the School can provide for the medical needs of the prospective student and to seek appropriate resources from the Department as necessary.

- v. Reports from previous educational placements, where appropriate
 - On date of receipt by the school, applications are placed on a Waiting List for either the moderate stream or the severe/profound stream in date order according to the criteria below pending consideration for enrolment by the Admissions Committee.

Please note: The application only becomes complete when this supporting documentation is received.

The principal or another member of staff designated by the principal, acting on behalf of the Committee, may contact or visit the prior pre-school/school of the applicant and may take the opportunity to observe the pupil and speak with staff.

The completion of an application form and the subsequent placement of a child's name on any list does not confer an automatic right to a place in the school. Each application will be considered in the light of the selection criteria outlined below.

Criteria for admission to the School:

- Priority is given to pass pupils of the School who may have unsuccessfully transferred to another school.
- Priority order of applications for children who were refused admission in the previous year/s (based on recommendations of School's Admission Committee).
- Priority order of current children seeking places from the Foundation's pre-school, Rainbow Lodge.
- Priority order of the number applications for children seeking placement from the Foundation's junior school for pupils with a mild general learning disability – Scoil Eanna and the Foundation's senior school for pupils with a mild general learning disability – Scoil Bernadette
- The number and needs of prospective pupils currently on the waiting lists.
- The Department's maximum class average directives (currently 8 pupils per class of pupils with moderate general learning disabilities, 7 pupils per class of pupils with multiple general learning disabilities and 6 pupils per class of pupils with severe and profound general learning disabilities).
- In some cases, special resources, equipment and adaptations to facilitate the prospective student's access to the building or curriculum may be recommended to the Board by the Committee. The Board may, on the advice of the Committee, request that such resources, equipment and adaptations are in place before the prospective student is formally enrolled. The Board, in the interests of the prospective pupil and the other pupils in the School, may decide to refuse admission on the

grounds that the School cannot, with current resources and facilities, meet the needs of the prospective student.

The Committee will meet during the school year as required and will make its recommendation(s) on admission(s) to the Board. Notification of the decision of the Board will be sent to parents/guardians within 7 days.

Parents/guardians of successful applicants must confirm acceptance in writing within 7 days of the date of the letter offering admission to the School. If this is not received within the given timeframe the place will be offered to the next applicant.

Please note places cannot be held from year to year. If a place is offered and refused, the offer is invalidated and the place must be applied for again.

A mutually suitable time will be arranged between the principal and the parents/guardians of pupils who have been offered a place to view the School and its facilities first-hand. Information pertaining to the facilities and services on offer will be given to parents/guardians at this visit so that parents/guardians are informed in advance of the available services and facilities. Parents/Guardians will be given an Enrolment Pack to read and complete once enrolment has been accepted.

While recognising the right of parents/guardians to enrol their child in the school of their choice, the Board of Management of the School is also responsible to respect the rights of the existing school pupils. This requires balanced judgements, which are guided by the principles of natural justice and acting in the best interest of all children. Assisting the school in such circumstances, the Board of Management reserves the right to determine the maximum number of pupils in each separate classroom bearing in mind:

- Size of / available space in each classrooms
- Environmental / Sensory needs of the enrolled pupils
- Health & Safety issues

Each class grouping will be given careful consideration to optimise the individual's opportunities for quality learning by having the correct number of pupils and supporting staff in each classroom.

In the case of some applicants, to facilitate the child's access to the curriculum, it may be necessary to provide specific additional resources to that which are already available in the school (e.g. staff / accommodation / equipment / environmental adaptations or other supports may be required). It may be necessary to delay a child's starting date in the school to ensure that all essential supports are in place beforehand.

Unsuccessful Applicants

Parents/Guardians of unsuccessful applicants will be informed in writing of the reason why their application for admission has been refused and of their right to appeal the decision under Section 29 of the 1998 Act, as amended by Section 26 of the Education (Welfare) Act 2000 (the "2000 Act"). Appeals may be made on the Appeals Application Form, available from the School on request, within 42 calendar days from the date the decision of the Board was notified to the parents/guardians. The form is also available on the Department's website at www.irlgov.ie/educ. The Admissions Committee also has the right of appeal.

Placement Review

Occasionally, post-admission, concerns regarding the suitability of a pupil's placement may arise and a review of the School's ability to meet the pupil's continuing needs in a way that

ensures that the pupil develops to his/her full potential may be necessary. Parents/Guardians will be kept informed by the Principal of any concerns that might arise at the earliest opportunity and will be asked by the Principal to work in partnership with the class teacher, SNA's and relevant multi-disciplinary team member(s) to consider all options open to the pupil up to and including a review of the pupil's placement. In the event of an indication that the pupil may not be suitably placed, the Board may request that a multi-disciplinary team assessment is carried out to determine the best options open to the student.

Health

Successful applicants who require regular medicines or specific medical procedures of any sort are required to provide the School with signed parental consent stating the times and circumstances of when the medicine should be administered. An up-to-date medical report shall be requested so that the School can assess its ability to cater for the student's future medical needs. Should a pupil already enrolled require new medicines/medical procedures, the school, in consultation with parents/guardians and school nurse, will reassess its ability to meet the pupil's needs.

Codes of Behaviour

Pupils enrolled in the School are required to co-operate with the School's Code of Behaviour (the "Code") prepared pursuant to Section 23 of the 2000 Act, as well as all policies on curriculum, organisation and management. Parents/Guardians shall also be asked to sign the Code of Conduct for Parents/Guardians Policy. The Board expects that parents/guardians will work in partnership with the School staff to ensure that they and their child co-operate with such policies. A copy of the School's Codes will be given to each parent/guardian as part of the enrolment process. This copy must be signed by the parent/guardian and returned to the principal on/prior to enrolment.

Principal: Anne Hartnett
Telephone 021-4643244

Reviewed by the Board of Management on: 14/06/17

Signed: _____
Jerry Buttimer, Chairman