

ENROLMENT POLICY



St. Augustine's School

Introductory Statement

The Board of Management is setting out its policy in accordance with the provisions of the Education Act 1998 and the Board of Management trusts that by doing so, parents, guardians and professionals will be assisted in relation to our enrolment process.

Rationale

This enrolment policy outlines the procedures to be followed by the parents and guardians of the referred pupil, the referral agency, the pupil's current school, the Principal and designated staff of St. Augustine's School, in accordance with legislative requirements.

Mission

St. Augustine's School has a mission to promote excellence in special education.

School Ethos

St. Augustine's School ethos is Christian in the Catholic tradition, open and welcoming to those of other traditions. The principles of excellence, hospitality, compassion and respect for difference ensure that in St. Augustine's School all members of the community are valued and their strengths are celebrated.

School Profile

St. Augustine's School is a co-educational, day and boarding school providing educational, social, recreational and vocational training programmes for approximately 160 students with Mild General Learning Disabilities (MGLD). Our school currently caters for students between ages 8 and 18 years. St. Augustine's School was established in the 1930's and operates under the Department of Education & Skills (DES), from which grants and resources are received annually. Regulations are laid down by the DES. The Chairperson of the Board of Management is Ms. Marian Coughlan and the Principal is Mr. David O'Brien.

A maximum of sixty of our students have an additional diagnosis of Autism/MGLD. MGLD may encompass a wide range of presentations and may be accompanied by additional diagnoses. Accordingly, best practise may require an integrated assessment of a student's intellectual, social, emotional and adaptive living skills to determine the appropriateness of an educational placement in St. Augustine's School. In some cases, St. Augustine's School may accommodate students with a high moderate intellectual disability and whose adaptive living skills are at a high level. Other considerations include a child's individual strengths, educational attainments, progress in school to-date, and their ability to avail of the programmes we currently offer. These cases are carefully considered on an individual basis, depending on the pupil's overall profile and in line with the following Policy Statement.

This enrolment policy is based on principles of non-discrimination (e.g. race, creed, ethnicity, etc.). For students who do not wish to participate in religious instruction, alternative curricular activities may be accessed at these times.

We endeavour to ensure that each student has a positive and successful experience at our school. For some students, a part time placement that increases incrementally to a full day/week may be in their best interest. If it is felt this is necessary to ease the new student into the school community, it will be agreed with parents in advance. The criteria for demonstration that the student is ready for an increase in the length of their day will be agreed by the class teacher, principal and parents.

All new students are entered on the Primary Online Database (POD) system and a letter is sent to their previous school (Appendix A).

Programmes

Academic Programmes currently on offer:

- Primary Curriculum
- Junior Certificate
- Junior Cycle Level 2
- Further Education & Training Awards Council (FETAC) Level 3
- Junior Certificate Schools Programme (JCSP)
- Home Economics
- Art, Ceramics
- Music
- Sport e.g. PE, swimming, athletics, basketball, football
- Religion, including preparation for the Sacraments.

The educational provision within our school depends on the grants and staffing resources provided by the DES and the local Education Training Board. St. Augustine's School operates within the regulations set down, from time to time, by the DES. St. Augustine's School is classified as a primary school and so we adhere to the annual calendar for primary schools. Our more senior post primary students aged 16-18 spend a half day in school and a half day in the vocational skills areas.

July Education Programme (also known as July Provision)

Students with a diagnosis of autism may have the opportunity for an extended school year to include up to four weeks in July, subject to the terms and conditions published annually by the DES and subject to staffing.

Vocational Skills Programme

While in Vocational Skills, students may avail of the following programmes on site:

- Horticulture / Environment
- Office and Retail Skills
- Cookery and Catering Skills
- General (DIY) Skills
- Car Valeting

Extended Day Programme

Some students get the opportunity to improve their independent living skills and social skills in our Extended Day Programme (between 3.00 and 9.00 p.m. – Monday – Thursday).

School Facilities

- Extensive modern computer suite
- Interactive whiteboard in all classrooms
- Resource Rooms
- Family Room
- Large gymnasium
- Ceramics workshop
- Library
- Swimming Pool
- Oratory
- Outdoor facility for basketball, soccer and tennis
- Junior Certificate standard Home Economics kitchen with 6 work-stations.

Referral Procedure

Anyone can refer a student to St. Augustine's School, although it is expected that parents/guardians will always be consulted. Applications are processed during the Academic Year prior to enrolment and will be evaluated on the basis of the selection criteria outlined below. As a student's needs may change over time, applicants are not placed on a waiting list for enrolment in future years.

- Application packs are available to parents/guardians in the school year prior to making an application.
- **Applications will only be accepted by registered post from the first school day in September each year for enrolment of students the following September.** All applications, including hand-delivered applications or registered or regular post received *before* the first school day in September, will be returned to sender.
- Envelopes containing applications received by registered post will be selected at random each day and assigned a number on category list.
- Incomplete applications will be returned.
- As we are oversubscribed for placements each year, applications will be divided into three groups as per Psychological Report and processed in order from list 1-3 below:
 - 1) Mild General Learning Disability (**MGLD**) and **Autistic** Spectrum Disorder – all applications from students in this group will be processed up to our cap of 60 students within the school.
 - 2) **MGLD** – IQ 50 – 70 and **Moderate** Learning Disability with **High Adaptive Functional Living Skills**.
 - 3) Oversubscribed years – applications from these students with dates of birth between 1st July 2000 and 30th June 2001 and 1st July 2002 and 30th June 2003 will only be processed after other applications outside of these age brackets.

Parents and professionals wishing to enrol a student in St. Augustine's School should forward a letter of referral accompanied by the completed documentation requested in the application packs i.e.

Pack 1 – Parents/Carers

- NCSE forms (see Appendix B)
 - Form 1 – SNA Support
 - Form 2 – School Transport
 - Form 3 – Assistive Technology
 - Form 7 – Enrolment in a Special School
 - Behavioural Care Needs Form (BCN 1)
- Registration Form (to include copy of birth certificate and up-to-date medical information)
- Medical Protocol Form (if already in place)
- Psychological Report
 - Should have been conducted **within 2 years of the date of application**
 - Should be conducted by a qualified psychologist
 - Should state diagnosis
 - The same report should **recommend a place in a special school**
 - Identify the special educational needs of the pupil along with a statement of resources and interventions required to meet such needs.
 - It is preferable that the **students IQ** be identified in the report.
- Child and Family History Form
- Permission to seek and share same information with relevant agencies supporting child's best interests.
- Parent / Carer Referral Form
- Assessment of Independent Living Skills
- Any other relevant reports e.g. occupational therapy, social work, speech and language, etc.

Pack 2 – Current School

- School Referral
- Recent individual education plans
- Recent School report (including resource if relevant)
- Samples of student's work (3-4 pages each of Maths and English – no workbooks, copy books, etc. please).

The referral letter should be addressed to: **The Principal, St. Augustine's School, Carysfort Avenue, Blackrock, Co. Dublin.** Applications will be acknowledged by the School Principal within 21 days. This acknowledgement does not infer an offer of a place in the school. A copy of the school's Enrolment Policy is sent to all applicants upon request. Our Enrolment Policy is also available on our school website www.saintaugustines.ie.

St. Augustine's School does not cater for students with a diagnosis of autism and a moderate learning disability.

Unsuitable referrals e.g. students with a diagnosis of severe-profound will not be processed and the sender will receive a phone call from the school principal.

Criteria for Acceptance

All applications will be evaluated using the following criteria:

- The applicant meets the profile of the school.
- Appropriate documentation is supplied to enable the school to make a decision.
- There is an age appropriate place in the school. St. Augustine's is oversubscribed for students born between
 - 1st July 2000 and 30th June 2001 and
 - 1st July 2002 and 30th June 2003.

All applications received from students in these age brackets will only be processed after other applications outside of these age brackets.

- The applicant's medical needs can be safely managed by staff.
- The capacity of the programmes at St. Augustine's to assist the student applicant in meeting their potential.
- The capacity of the programmes on offer, to meet the parents' expectations regarding educational and other outcomes for their child.
- The needs of the whole school population at the time of application.
- The health and safety requirements of the applicant and/or other students are not compromised.
- The health and safety requirements of our staff.
- Distance from school and sanction from the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) for bus transport.
- The capacity of the school to provide for the needs of the applicant considering the necessary resources available to it.
- Parents/guardians of successful applicants are willing to engage with the school by signing relevant School Policies - Code of Behaviour, Health and Safety, etc.
- A student with significant emotional/behavioural challenges may not be offered a placement if it is believed that his/her enrolment would impact negatively on the safety, welfare or learning of other students.

Our school Board of Management can facilitate a maximum of 160 students each year due to the physical limitations of our school.

Selection Procedures

Applications are assessed by the **Enrolment Committee** based on the criteria outlined above. The Enrolment Committee is approved by the Board of Management and consists of the School Principal, Deputy Principal and four post-holders. The Enrolment Committee meets regularly to discuss information contained in application packs and to share information gained from visiting a pupil during a school observation and/or from a pupil visiting our school for a tour.

Parents, guardians, professionals and students may be invited to visit St. Augustine's School during school hours by arrangement. Such visits may help all stakeholders to decide if St. Augustine's School can meet a student's needs. On such visits, information on programmes offered and facilities available in our school will be shared.

The Enrolment Committee may decide to conduct a school observation for certain applicants. However, this may not be possible in some cases. Using their professional knowledge and experience, the committee formulates a professional opinion regarding each application and may advise parents/ guardians and other professionals regarding alternative options in the event of a refusal to enrol a pupil. The Enrolment Committee prepares a report and makes a recommendation to the Board of Management. On receipt of all the relevant reports and on completion of necessary meetings/visits, a decision will then be made by the Board of Management as to the suitability of St. Augustine's School for the prospective student. A letter of offer, signed by the Chairperson, is forwarded to the parent/guardian of successful applicants on behalf of the Board of Management. Similarly, a letter of refusal is sent to unsuccessful applicants.

The principal may meet with prospective students and parents/guardians. Vacancies that occur following the completion of the enrolment process are offered to the next placed suitable applicant from the appropriate group.

Parents of successful applicants are asked to complete an Acceptance of School Placement Form.

If your child has been offered a placement, the school principal then writes to the NCSE asking for approval of transport arrangements and other appropriate resources. You will be notified during the summer, usually in July, before your child commences regarding a start date, school uniform, school rules, etc. If you have any queries/concerns about your child's application, please contact the school.

Right to Appeal

Where an application is not successful, the parent or guardian will be advised of their right to appeal to the Chairperson of the School Board of Management in the first instance. This in no way affects your rights under Section 29 of the Education Act 1998.

Date:

To: Principal,

A Chara

In accordance with Section 20 (6) of the Education Welfare Act, I wish to inform you that the following student(s) is/are to be enrolled in St. Augustine's School, Obelisk Park, Carysfort Avenue, Blackrock, Co. Dublin (Roll No. 184990) in the week commencing ...

Please ensure that the following student(s) is/are marked as leavers on Primary Online Database (POD).

Student's Name:

DOB:

Yours sincerely

David O'Brien
School Principal



Procedures for requesting supports from the National Council for Special Education (NCSE)

An important element of the Enrolment Process in St. Augustine's School is to ascertain the individual needs of each student and what supports are required to be in place prior to commencing in school.

The NCSE is the agency empowered to sanction supports in all areas of special education (SNA Support, School Transport, Assistive Technology, Behavioural Care Needs). All requests to the NCSE are required to have the signatures of the Principal and the Parents / Guardians. Responses to these requests often take months.

I consider it to be in everyone's best interests if you could consider signing the relevant request form / forms today which you think may be required or helpful to the young person seeking enrolment in St. Augustine's School. In addition to signing the request forms please also submit any documentary evidence you may have to support the request forms. This will result in the school being in a position to forward the relevant request forms to the NCSE immediately following the decision of the Board of Management to offer a place. This, in turn, will improve the chances of having transport, SNA support, etc. in place prior to attending on the first day.

Please remember that signing these forms does not guarantee a place in the school. Neither does it guarantee that your request will be granted by the NCSE. However, we do guarantee that you will be informed of any supports we are successful in securing.

Should you require clarity on anything in this form, I am more than happy to discuss it with you. Additionally, should you prefer to wait to sign request forms until after you have secured a place we are happy to accommodate that decision.

David O'Brien, School Principal