

## **Admission Policy of St Augustine's School**

**School Address: Obelisk Park, Carysfort Avenue, Blackrock, Co Dublin**

**Roll number: 184990**

**School Patron/s: Archbishop of Dublin**

**School Trustees: Saint John of God Hospitaller Services Group clg.**

### **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 August 18th, 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 Augustine'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. Augustine's Special School is a Catholic co-educational primary school with a Catholic ethos under the patronage of the Archbishop of Dublin and the Trusteeship of the Saint John of God Hospitaller Services Group clg. "Catholic Ethos" in the context of a Catholic primary school means the ethos and characteristic spirit of the Roman Catholic Church, which aims at promoting:

- (a) the full and harmonious development of all aspects of the person of the pupil, including the intellectual, physical, cultural, moral and spiritual aspects; and
- (b) a living relationship with God and with other people; and
- (c) a philosophy of life inspired by belief in God and in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus; and
- (d) the formation of the pupils in the Catholic faith,

and which school provides religious education for the pupils in accordance with the doctrines, practices and traditions of the Roman Catholic Church, and/or such ethos and/or characteristic spirit as may be determined or interpreted from time to time by the Irish Episcopal Conference.

In accordance with S.15 (2) (b) of the Education Act, 1998 the Board of Management of St Augustine's school shall uphold, and be accountable to the patron for so upholding, the characteristic spirit of the school as determined by the cultural, educational, moral, religious, social, linguistic and spiritual values and traditions which inform and are characteristic of the objectives and conduct of the school.

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

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

St. Augustine's School caters for students between 8 and 18 years of age. Our school provides opportunities in educational, social, recreational and vocational training programmes for 160 students. St Augustine's school caters for students with Mild General Learning Disabilities (MGLD) and students with a high Moderate General Learning Disability whose adaptive living skills are at a high level. A maximum of sixty of our students have a dual diagnosis of MGLD and Autism. MGLD may encompass a wide range of presentations and may be accompanied by additional diagnoses. Due to the range of special needs our school caters for, class sizes may vary depending on the number of pupils within a class presenting with additional needs. In this regard, some classes may be deemed by the principal to be full to capacity, and in such an instance the Board of Management may decide that no additional pupils may be enrolled in these classes during the school year. School capacity varies depending on the needs of the students we are supporting at a particular time. Our school has the physical capacity to cater for 160 students currently.

Applications are accepted from all students within the timeframe for receipt of applications as set out in the school's Annual Admissions Notice.

### **Educational Programmes**

St Augustine's school caters for the educational needs of our students through an adapted Primary Curriculum and the Junior Cycle, QQI (formerly known as FETAC) and JCSP (Junior Cert Schools Programme). Our school does not currently offer Leaving Certificate Programmes but we are considering introducing a Leaving Certificate programme in the future. Students currently graduate at the age of 18 with a combination of Junior Cert Level 2 & 3, QQI level 2 & 3 and JCSP qualifications.

### **Referral Procedures**

Applications should be made in writing by the parent or legal guardian of the applicant. If a third party, acting on behalf of a parent/guardian, refers a young person to the school, it is expected that it is with the parent(s) agreement. The person referring the young person to the school is the person with whom the school will enter into correspondence. Written consent from the parent/guardian must accompany the application when an application is made by any third party.

Applications must be accompanied by a Psychological report (which includes an assessment of cognitive ability) within 2 years of the application date and school reports from the previous school year. The psychological report should recommend a Special school Placement and clearly show the cognitive functioning of the student operating in the mild/

high moderate range IQ of 40-70. The psychological report should also make reference to the need for a SNA and/or bus escort by a student if deemed a necessary support.

Other relevant clinical reports such as Psychiatric, Occupational Therapist, Speech and Language Therapist and/or Social Worker should be provided as soon as possible if available following acceptance of a school placement offer by a parent/guardian. Any recommendations for Assistive Technology should be included in these reports.

Completed Application forms should be addressed to: School Principal, St Augustine's Special School, Obelisk Park, Carysfort Avenue, Blackrock, Co. Dublin, A94X8K7.

### **3. Admission Statement**

St. Augustine's 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.

#### **Special Schools**

St. Augustine's 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 and does not discriminate in relation to the admission of a student who does not have the category of needs specified.

#### **All denominational schools**

St Augustine's school is a school whose objective is to provide education in an environment which promotes certain religious values and does not discriminate where it refuses to admit as a student a person who is not Catholic and it is proved that the refusal is essential to maintain the ethos of the school.

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

St Augustine's School with the approval of the Minister for Education and Skills, provides an education exclusively for students with Mild & High Moderate General Learning Disabilities and who fall in the IQ Range of 40-70. St Augustine's school does not cater for students with a dual diagnosis of ASD and Moderate General Learning Disability.

#### 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.

##### **Special School**

St Augustine's school provides an education exclusively for students with Mild & High Moderate General Learning Disabilities and who fall in the IQ Range of 40-70. St Augustine's school does not cater for students with a dual diagnosis of ASD and Moderate 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. As St Augustine's is a special school, we do not have a particular intake group such as mainstream schools. Our school is oversubscribed with requests for placements each year.

##### **All denominational schools**

St Augustine's is a Roman Catholic school and may refuse to admit as a student a person who is not of a Roman Catholic denomination where it is proved that the refusal to maintain the ethos of the 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:

##### **Criteria for Acceptance**

All applicants will be evaluated using the following criteria:

- Completed applications have been received by the closing date via registered post. (Any applications not sent via registered post will be returned to the sender).
- Copy of birth certificate received with application.
- The applicant meets the profile of Mild General Learning Disability or High

Moderate Learning Disability and who fall into the IQ range of 40-70.

- There is an age-appropriate place available in a class/age group.
- If a class is oversubscribed, preference will be given to the child in that group living closest to our school.
- Documentation received with application of proof of address with an eircode stating the child is ordinarily resident (ie. with at least one parent/ guardian) at the address provided in the application.
- Student applications will be processed in the following order:
- (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 High Moderate Learning Disability (IQ 40-50) with High Adaptive Functional Living Skills.
- The Parents/Guardians willingness to confirm in writing that the Code of Behaviour of the school is acceptable to him or her.

#### **Selection Procedure:**

- All applications are assessed by the Admissions Advisory Team based on the criteria outlined above. The Admissions Advisory Team is approved by the Board of Management and consists of the Principal, Deputy Principal and Post holders.
- The Admissions Advisory Team commences its work immediately after the closing date as outlined in the Annual Admissions Notice. At its first meeting, the school Principal advises the team of the number of vacancies in the school for the coming Academic Year and the age profile and classes where these vacancies occur.
- The Admissions Advisory Team will on occasions seek the professional services of the Schools NEPS Psychologist in assisting to ensure that the applicant meets the enrolment criteria for St. Augustine's Special School.

The Admissions Advisory Team submits a report to the Board of Management and all applicants are informed in writing as to the decision of the school, within the timeline outlined in the annual admissions notice.

In the event of an age category being oversubscribed, priority will be given to students based on the distance of the school from their primary residence, starting with the student whose primary residence is the shortest travelling distance from the school. Google maps will be used to make this decision.

If a set of twins apply to our school and their age group is oversubscribed, a place will be offered to the older child.

If the relevant documentation requested is not included with an application form, the application will be deemed incomplete, not considered for enrolment and returned to the sender.

## **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 St. Augustine's School insofar as it is necessary in order to ascertain whether or not the student has the category of special educational needs concerned).
- (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;
- (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.

## 8. Decisions on applications

All decisions on applications for admission to St Augustine's 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

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. Augustine's 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 are 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. Augustine's 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 Augustine's 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. Augustine's 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 once the criteria have been applied.

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.

The waiting list will operate for one school year. It will run until the end of the school year for which the offers were made in the application process. **On the last school day in June each year, the waiting list will cease to operate. The application process will start again each school year. If a child has been entered on a waiting list for any particular year, this will not give them any priority for entry in the following academic year. A new application for a child is required each school year for the following year even if they are on a waiting 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**

St Augustine's Special School accepts applications from Parents/Guardians of students of all age groups (8-18 years) as outlined in the school's Admission Policy. All applications must be submitted within the timeframe for receipt of applications as set out in the school's Annual Admission Policy.

Offers of places that become available after the commencement of the school year in which admission is sought will be made to those students on the waiting list, in accordance with the order of priority in relation to which students have been placed on the list.

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

This rule applies to all schools.

The Board of Management of St. Augustine's 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 to 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.

Ratified by St Augustine's School Board of Management

Date: August 24<sup>th</sup>, 2020

Chairperson's Signature: Ms Marian Coughlan

Date: August 24<sup>th</sup>, 2020

Principal's Signature: Mr David O' Brien

Date for review: May 2021