



Admission Policy

St. Joseph's Primary School for Children with Visual Impairment

School Address: Gracepark Road, Drumcondra, Dublin D09C803

Roll Number: 18417J

School Patron: Archbishop of Dublin

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 27th July 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. Joseph's Primary School for Children with Visual Impairment (St. Joseph's Primary VI) 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. Joseph's Primary School for Children with Visual Impairment is a Catholic co-educational special national school with a Catholic ethos under the patronage of the Archbishop of Dublin.

"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. Joseph's Primary VI 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.

School Mission Statement

School Motto: 'Together we can do so much' – Helen Keller

In line with the Catholic ethos of the school and the core belief of Antonio Rosmini, founder of the Institute of Charity (Rosminians), our aim at St. Joseph's is to provide an inclusive learning environment for children with visual impairment, where each child is nurtured holistically. Taking account of each child's visual impairment, and any additional special need, we seek to ensure access to a full, balanced curriculum which is suitably challenging and delivered with dignity. We recognise that each child is unique and should be given opportunity to learn in an inclusive learning environment where ability, not disability, is central.

We are committed to making school a safe and happy place for the children, with a positive atmosphere of encouragement and praise, and good behaviour based on consideration, respect and tolerance for others. The Board of Management and staff recognise the importance and benefit of working together with families and all supporting services in order to help each child reach his/ her full potential, as a learner and for life.

3. Admission Statement

St. Joseph's Primary VI 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.

All denominational schools

St. Joseph's Primary VI 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.

Special schools

St. Joseph's Primary VI 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.

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

Special School

St. Joseph's Primary VI is a special national school. With the approval of the Minister for Education and Skills, it provides an education exclusively for students who have:

- a **visual impairment** that cannot be corrected satisfactorily by wearing glasses or contact lenses and for whom visual impairment is their primary barrier to educational progress. For some pupils at St. Joseph's, visual impairment (**VI**) is the only disability. Other children have visual impairment with additional needs such as a physical disability, a general learning disability (**GLD**) or autism.

Applications to St Joseph's will only be considered if a child meets **all** of the following threshold criteria:

- a medical diagnosis from an ophthalmologist or optometrist of:
 - visual acuity of 6/18 or less OR
 - a deteriorating visual condition OR
 - a significant central vision and/or peripheral visual field loss OR
 - a significant difficulty with functional vision such that seeing and learning are affected
- confirmation of visual impairment and recommendation for special school placement at St. Joseph's from a Visiting Teacher for VI or an educational psychologist.
(Where significant behaviour difficulties exist, a psychological report will be required.)
- at least 4 years old by 1st September of the year of entry
(An entry age of 5yrs. is preferable, given the developmental delay often associated with visual impairment.)
- parent is willing to apply on behalf of child to ChildVision for a multi-disciplinary team assessment to determine any necessary nursing or therapy supports, relating to visual impairment or an additional special need, that he/ she may require during the school day.

Additional Threshold Criteria relating to Applications for Junior Cycle L1LP:

Many of the pupils at St. Joseph's Primary VI transfer to mainstream secondary or another suitable special school when they reach secondary school age.

In June 2018, the Department of Education gave sanction to St. Joseph's Primary VI to **retain students with the most complex needs beyond primary age (12-18 yrs.)**. This is a provision for students of secondary age for whom Junior Cycle Level 1 Learning programmes (L1LP) would be suitable. Sanction to retain students beyond primary age remains in line with our designation as a special school for students whose primary barrier to learning is visual impairment.

A student with severe emotional and behavioural needs may be best served in another second-level setting where specialist personnel could provide him / her with optimal levels of support.

Transfer into Junior Cycle LILP at St. Joseph's will not be automatic. Application must be made on the relevant application form.

Applications will be considered if a pupil meets **all** of the following threshold criteria:

- has completed 8 or more years at Primary level
- at least 12 yrs. old by 1st September of the year of entry
- has been a pupil at St. Joseph's Primary VI before reaching 12yrs of age or has a recommendation for transfer from a Visiting Teacher for VI
- has visual impairment with either:
 - a lower moderate or severe and profound general learning disability **OR**
 - a moderate general learning disability and an additional disability other than a severe emotional or behavioural disorder

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

All denominational schools

St. Joseph's Primary VI is a Catholic school and may refuse to admit as a student a person who is not of the Catholic denomination where it is proved that the refusal is essential to maintain the ethos of the school.

Special School

St. Joseph's Primary VI provides an education exclusively for students with significant visual impairment for whom this impairment is their primary barrier to learning, 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

All Applications

Since there can be a wide range of intellectual capabilities and support needs represented amongst applicants from year to year, the first selection criterion for all applications to St. Joseph's is:

1. Vacancy in a suitable class

The selection criteria, in order of priority (Criteria 2 onwards) are outlined below for:

- Applicants for Junior Infants or Junior MDVI class (VI with additional needs)
- Applicants with VTVI recommendation to transfer from another school
- Applicants for Junior Cycle L1LP

Applicants for Junior Infants or Junior MDVI (VI with additional needs)

2. Sibling of child/ children who are attending, or have attended, ChildVision Preschool or St. Joseph's Primary VI and meet criteria in Section 4 above (eldest child will have priority in this ranking)
3. Child of school-entry age who meets the criteria in Section 4 and for whom ChildVision Preschool has been the sole or main early intervention service. (eldest child will have priority in this ranking)
4. Child of parents or grandparents who have attended St. Joseph's Primary VI and meet criteria in Section 4 (to maximum of 25% of available places- eldest child will have priority in this ranking)
5. Child of school-entry age who has not attended ChildVision Preschool but meets the criteria outlined in Section 4 (eldest child will have priority in this ranking)

Applicants with VTVI recommendation to transfer from another school

2. Child who meets the criteria in Section 4 and whose addition to the class would cause least disruption to the learning environment in the existing class. Behaviour report from existing school will be taken into consideration - See Section 14.

Applicants for Junior Cycle L1LP

NOTE: *Sanction for St Joseph's Primary VI to retain pupils with the most complex needs beyond primary age is still governed by our Department of Education designation as a special school for students whose chief barrier to learning is their visual impairment. A student with severe emotional and behavioural needs may be best served in another second-level setting where specialist personnel could provide him / her with optimal levels of support.*

2. Pupil who has completed 8 or more years in primary school, where at least the last 5 years have been at St. Joseph's Primary VI, for whom a relevant clinician report states that the chief barrier to learning is visual impairment, with:
 - a lower moderate or severe and profound general learning disability OR
 - a moderate learning disability and an additional disability (*excluding severe emotional and behavioural needs*)

3. Pupil who has completed fewer than 5 years at primary level in St. Joseph's and for whom a relevant clinician report states that the chief barrier to learning is visual impairment with:
 - a lower moderate or severe and profound general learning disability OR
 - a moderate learning disability and an additional disability (*excluding severe emotional and behavioural needs*)
4. Pupil of secondary age who fits criteria 2 or 3 above but has a link with another service that provides second-level education and that may provide optimal levels of support.
5. Pupil of secondary age who fits criteria 2 or 3 above and has a recommendation for transfer from a Visiting Teacher for VI

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:

If there are two applicants tied for a place in the same class, a decision will be made based on:

- Age: priority will be given to the older applicant. If two applicants are the oldest, having the same date of birth, a draw will be conducted by an independent person to ascertain which child shall be offered the place.

6. 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, other than in relation to a student's prior attendance at Child Vision Preschool.
- (b) the payment of fees or contributions (howsoever described) to the school;
- (c) a student's academic ability, skills or aptitude, so long as there is a vacancy in a suitable class (See Section 6, Criterion 1);
- (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 except where:
 - (1) a sibling is attending or has attended St. Joseph's Primary VI
 - (2) a parent or grandparent has attended St. Joseph's Primary VI - to a maximum of 25% of the available spaces as set out in the school's annual admission notice.

(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).

7. Decisions on applications

All decisions on applications for admission to St. Joseph's Primary VI 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 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.

8. 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).

9. Acceptance of an offer of a place by an applicant

In accepting an offer of admission from St. Joseph's the applicant must:

- Complete the Acceptance Form and return it to the school by the specified date
- Read and indicate acceptance of the school's Code of Behaviour by signing it and returning it with the Acceptance Form
- Complete parental/ guardian consent section on forms provided by the school to notify NCSE of the child's enrolment at St. Joseph's and to make application for school bus transport and SNA support.

The applicant must also indicate—

(i) whether or not he/ she has accepted an offer of admission for another school or schools. If he/ she has accepted such an offer, details of the offer or offers concerned must be provided.

(ii) whether or not he/ she has applied for and is awaiting confirmation of an offer of admission from another school or schools, and if so, must provide details of the other school or schools concerned.

10. 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. Joseph's Primary VI 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.

11. 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).

12. 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. Joseph's Primary VI 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. Joseph's Primary VI 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.

13. 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.

14. 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:

Admission to classes other than Junior Infants or Junior MDVI

- If a Visiting Teacher for VI recommends that a pupil on her/ his caseload should transfer to St. Joseph's Primary VI from another school, and if a vacancy in a suitable class exists, a comprehensive record of the pupil's behaviour in that school will be required and considered. A child with severe emotional and behavioural needs may best be served in another setting where specialist personnel could provide him / her with optimal levels of support.

If, following consideration, the principal recommends to the Board of Management that the pupil fits the criteria for enrolment:

- an application form must be completed
- necessary reports submitted
- an application must be made to ChildVision for an MDT assessment to confirm any necessary nursing or therapy support.

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:

- If there are still vacancies in the school after applications received by mid-February have been processed, late applications will be considered and assessed according to the principles, threshold criteria, order of priority and decision-making criteria mentioned above.

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

This rule applies to all schools.

The board of St. Joseph's Primary VI 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.

16. Arrangements regarding students not attending religious instruction

The following are the school's arrangements for students, where the parent or in the case of a student who has reached the age of 18 years, the student, 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.

17. 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.

Signed:  (Chairperson) Date: 28.07.20

Signed:  (Principal) Date: 28.07.20