



ST. MARY'S SPECIAL SCHOOL , ENROLMENT/ADMISSIONS POLICY

Introduction

Saint Mary's Special School, Drumcar is a co-educational special school under the patronage of the Archbishop of Armagh and the Trusteeship of Saint John of God Hospitaller Services Group clg. This Enrolment/Admission policy has been drawn up by the Board of Management in accordance with the provisions of the Education Act 1998, the Education Welfare Act 2000 and the Equal Status Act 2000. Saint Mary's Special School is funded by the Department of Education and Science.

The application form for admission is published on the school's website and will be made available on hard copy on request.

Characteristic spirit and general objectives of the school

Saint Mary's Special School provides education for pupils between four and eighteen years of age with a Moderate /Severe/Profound General Learning Disability (GLD) which includes children on the Autism Spectrum Disorder.

The main school is located in the grounds of St John of God's Services, Drumcar. Two Outreach Classes have been established, one in Drogheda and one in Dundalk.

The school is not a therapeutic school for students with significant emotional and behaviour difficulties, we are not a school that caters for pupils with violent behavioural outbursts, although the school does support a number of pupils who experience some behaviours of concern, secondary to their learning difficulties. Access to a Multi- Disciplinary Team Support will be through HSE Progressing Children Disability Regional Network Teams. The school welcomes referrals for enrolment of any pupil who on assessment is functioning within the above range of learning disability and that this learning disability is her/his primary special educational need. The school provides an educational service to children residing mainly in the Local Health Office Areas 8.

The selection of pupils for enrolment and discharge is a matter for decision by the Board of Management following consultation with the School Principal and the school's Admissions Advisory Team. While recognising the rights of parents to enrol their child in the school of their choice, the Board of Management is also responsible for respecting the rights of the existing school community and in particular, the health and safety of the pupils already enrolled. This requires balanced judgements, which are guided by the principles of natural justice and acting in the best interest and safety of all children.

St Mary's Special School does not grant children an extra year over the age of 18.

The school provides religious education for 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 Mary's Special 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.

Mission Statement

We endeavor to provide the highest quality education and care to each student which is appropriate to the ability, alongside a range of activities designed to enhance the student's full potential. In partnership with students/parents/guardians, families and/or residential personal as well as our Trustees, we seek to promote students individual, emotional, social, physical and spiritual development. The dignity of each pupil is paramount, thus ensuring equality of provision. We believe that each pupil is entitled to an appropriate educational provision, regardless of individual levels of attainment and functioning. While enabling each pupil to develop his/her potential to the full, we also want our students to be happy in school and to enjoy their time there. We seek to achieve this through a developmental life skills Programme and a variety of evidence based teaching strategies across a broad and balanced curriculum.

Our mission is one of caring and support which respects the dignity and welfare of each pupil and taking cognizance of their changing needs.

Special School

St Mary's Special School provides an Education exclusively for students with moderate/severe and profound/general learning disability. This includes children on the autistic spectrum **but not** with autism as a primary diagnosis.

Referral Procedure

Anyone can refer a pupil to Saint Mary's Special School, although it is expected that parents/guardians will always be consulted.

Applications are processed during the academic year prior to enrolment. In order to allow sufficient time for appropriate assessments to be completed and reviewed, **referrals for the following September will be accepted up to March 31st of that year** and will be evaluated on the basis of the selection criteria outlined below.

Referrals received after March 31st may not be processed in time for admission to the school the following September. As a pupil's needs may change over time, applications are not placed on a waiting list for enrolment in future years.

Parents and professionals wishing to enrol a pupil in the school should forward a letter of referral accompanied by the most recent Psychological Assessment (THIS MUST RECOMMEND SPECIAL SCHOOL PLACEMENT AND SPECIAL SCHOOL TRANSPORT) and previous school report if applicable. **A psychological assessment will not be accepted if it is more than two years old.** Other relevant clinical reports such as Speech and Language, Physiotherapy, Psychiatric, O.T. etc

should also be provided, if available. The referral letter should be addressed to: Mr Kevin Toale, School Principal, Saint Mary's Special School, Drumcar, Dunleer, Co Louth

Procedure for reviewing and agreeing new Enrolments to Saint Mary's Special School, Drumcar. .

1. All Initial enquires for enrolment should be addressed to the School Principal either in writing or by telephone. The Principal will act as an agent on behalf of the Board of Management.
2. 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.
3. Further to the conclusion of initial informal enquires, all formal applications for enrolment should be supported by a psychological assessment (not more than two years old) outlining the ascertained level of functioning of the individual child.
4. All applications are assessed by the **Admissions /Enrolment 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 Senior Post Holder within the school. Occasionally the team request the professional advice of the Psychologist and other Multi disciplinary members as necessary. The Principal may at times consult with and seek the advice of the Special Educational Needs Organiser (SENO) and the School Inspector. The team discuss each referral and the accompanying reports to determine the eligibility and needs of the prospective students. Following this, the team prepare a report to present to the Board of Management for discussion at the next B.O.M. meeting.
5. Sometimes the Principal or School staff will visit the pupil's current preschool/school placement and prepare a report to the B.O.M.
6. The school Principal meets with prospective pupil and parents/guardians. It is good practice to complete all NCSE Forms at this stage (see Appendix A)
7. 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 *Saint Mary's Special School* for the prospective student.
8. Final decisions in relation to all applications are made by the Board of Management.
9. A letter of offer, signed by the Chairperson, is forwarded to the parent/guardian of the applicant on behalf of the B.O.M.
10. Parents are asked to complete the following:
 - (a) School Acceptance Form.
 - (b) School Enrolment Form
 - (c) NCSE Transport Form.
 - (d) NCSE SNA Form.
 - (e) Medical Protocol Form.
11. We endeavour to ensure that each pupil has a positive and successful experience at our school. For some pupils, 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 and parents.
12. All new pupils on their first day in the school are entered on the POD system and a letter is sent to their previous school (Appendix C)

If it is deemed on the pupil's psychological assessment that an individualised specific SNA is needed for the pupil, an application for SNA support must be sent to the SENO and the pupil cannot enrol until the SNA is fully sanctioned and in place.

Criteria for Acceptance

All applicants will be evaluated using the following criteria:

1. The profile of the school meets the assessed needs of the Child being referred
2. Appropriate documentation is supplied to enable the school to make a decision.
3. There is an age appropriate place in the school
4. The applicant's medical needs can be safely managed by staff.
5. Parents/Guardians of successful candidates are willing to engage with the school by signing relevant School Policies e.g. Code of Behaviour, Health and Safety and Behaviour Management Policies.
6. The Health and Safety needs/rights of the applicant and / or other students are not compromised.
7. The capacity of the school to provide for the needs of the applicant in the light of the necessary resources available to it.

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 BOM.in the first instance. This in no way affects your rights under Section 29 of the Education Act 1998.

Admission Date

Normally admission to the school will occur within the first week of the new academic school year. Admission at any other time throughout the school year will be at the discretion of the Board of Management.

Suspension/Expulsion

In accordance with the terms and conditions laid down by the Education (Welfare) Act 2000, Section 23.2, a child may be suspended or expelled. This action will only be taken where there is no alternative and where the safety of pupil and/or staff is at risk. The regulations of the National Educational Welfare Board will be followed at all times.

Policy Revision

It is recognised that this enrolment policy may need to be revised/modified from time to time in the light of ongoing evaluation of new approaches and the implications of relevant future enrolment.

Adopted by the Board of Management St Mary's Special School

Signed ; Donor Sparks
Chairperson of School Board of Management

Date: 4th - 6. 2020

Signed; Kevin Tode
School Principal

Date: 4/6/2020

Appendix A

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

An important element of the Enrolment Process in Saint Mary's Special School, Drumcar 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 and Assistive Technology. 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 Saint Mary's Special School, Drumcar. 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.

School Principal

Appendix B

School Policies

- Admissions and Participation Policy
- Code of Behaviour
- Child Protection Policy
- Attendance Policy
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Internet Policies
- Administration of Medication Policy
- Intimate Care Policy
- Health and Safety Policy
- Healthy Eating Policy

Appendix C

Date:

To: **Principal**

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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 **Saint Mary's Special School, Drumcar** (Roll No. C) in the week commencing ...

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

Name:

DOB:

Yours sincerely

School Principal