



# St. Francis School

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## Admissions Policy

Diocese of Kildare & Leighlin

Approved

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## 1. Introduction

- 1.1. 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.
- 1.2. The policy was approved by the school patron **Bishop Denis Nulty on XXXXX**. It is published on the school's website and will be made available in hardcopy, on request, to any person who requests it.
- 1.3. The relevant dates and timelines for the 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.
- 1.4. This policy must be read in conjunction with the annual Admission Notice for the school year in question.
- 1.5. 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 Francis' is a Catholic co-educational Special school with a Catholic ethos. The Bishop of Kildare & Leighlin is the Patron of this school.

'Catholic schools are communities which are open, welcoming, and inclusive. Therefore, Catholic schools may include children who adhere to other religions or other stances for living. While mindful of their duty to educate in the distinctive beliefs, values, and practices of the Catholic community, teachers will bear witness to an attitude of respect for and appreciation of all'.

*'The Catholic Preschool & Primary Religious Education Curriculum p15'*

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:

- the full and harmonious development of all aspects of the person of the pupil, including the intellectual, physical, cultural, moral and spiritual aspects; and
- a living relationship with God and with other people; and
- a philosophy of life inspired by belief in God and in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus; and 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. Francis 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. Francis School ethos is based on a community of people who support, respect, and empower each other. It is a community of learning and teaching based on high professional standards and ethics.

At the heart of our school is a deep respect for each individual, a sense of care, a sense of fairness and justice, which in turn creates an environment where each student can develop spiritually, emotionally, physically, intellectually, and aesthetically.

In accordance with Section 15(2)(d) of the Education Act 1998, this policy sets out the school's policy on the admission of students and their participation in the school.

### **3. Admission Statement**

St Francis 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 religious grounds 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.
- (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.

*St. Francis School will cooperate with the National Council for Special Education in the performance by the Council of its functions under the*

*Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act 2004 relating to the provision of education to children with special educational needs, including in particular by the provision and operation of a special class or classes when requested to do so by the Council.*

*St. Francis School will comply with any direction served on the patron or the board, as the case may be, under section 37A and any direction served on the board under section 67(4B) of the Education Act.”*

### **All denominational schools**

St Francis' 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 (insert details of particular religious denomination concerned) and it is proved that the refusal is essential to maintain the ethos of the school.

### **Special schools**

St Francis' 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**

- 4.1. St. Francis School is a school which with the approval of the Minister and Department of Education and Skills provides an education exclusively to students who have a mild or moderate learning disability.

## **5. Admission of Students and Admissions Process**

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 Francis' is a Catholic school and may refuse to admit as a student a person who is not of Catholic where it is proved that the refusal is essential to maintain the ethos of the school.

## Special School

St Francis' provides an education exclusively for students with a mild or moderate 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.

### 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:

#### 6.1. *Priority of Applications*

The Board of Management will approve the class sizes based on recommendations of the principal prior to the posting of the admissions notice each year. This recommendation will be based on the current constitution of the classes. The board may direct that no additional pupils may enrol in these classes during the year.

School capacity varies according to the needs profile of the children being catered for at a particular time and may be revised by the board of management, at the point of the offering of places, depending on the needs of the applications. Board approval will be sought for any such change prior to the offering of places.

#### Selection Criteria:

1. Each applicant will be assessed by reference to available vacancies in the age appropriate, ability level and or specified disability classes and class levels. In circumstances where there are more applicants than places in a particular class, the applicant/s who best meets the age profile of the class will be chosen with reference to criteria 2 below.
2. Priority will be given by proximity to the school and in the following order: Portlaoise Parish, Laois County, Siblings of children who are already enrolled in St Francis's School (including stepsiblings residing at the same address), counties bordering on County Laois, applicants outside of this catchment area.
3. If 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:
  - Age will be the determining criteria, where the eldest applicant that meets the criteria set out in 1 and 2 above is selected.

6.2 If there is no place available, the child's name will be placed on the Waiting List, (if the school's enrolment criteria is met), for the duration of the school year. The waiting list will be drawn up by reference to criteria 2 above for all applicants

received by the closing date for applications. Late applicants, and or unsuccessful applicants who submit new information that meet the school's criteria, will be placed at the end of the school's waiting list in the order they are received.

## **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;
- (b) the payment of fees or contributions (howsoever described) to the school;
- (c) a student's academic ability, skills or aptitude other than to ascertain whether or not the student has the category of special educational needs catered for by School;
- (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**

8.1. All decisions on applications for admission to St Francis 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

(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.)

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.

## **9. Notifying applicants of decisions.**

- 9.1. Applicants will be informed in writing as to the decision of the school, within the timeline outlined in the annual admissions notice.
- 9.2. 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.
- 9.3. 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 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 the Board of Management of School where—

- (i) it is established that information contained in the application is false or misleading (including through the omission of any medical or psychological report, or the submission of out of date or inaccurate reports).
- (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 of this policy above.
- (v) The school has been designated by the National Council for Special Education or the Child and Family Agency under Section 67 of the Education Act, 1998 (when commenced) to admit a particular child and the only way to comply with the designation is to withdraw an offer of a place to another child.



## **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 data 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 Francis' 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. The criteria for the school's waiting list is set out at 6.2.

13.1. Where a place is not available for a particular child who otherwise meets the Threshold Criteria for placement in a school for pupils with mild to moderate disability, the parents will be asked if they wish their child to be placed on the Waiting List. The Waiting List will operate for one school year. It will run until the end of the Academic Year for which the offers were made in that Applications Process.

13.2. Placement on the waiting list of St Francis 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.

13.3. 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.

13.4. 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.

## **14. Late Applications**

All applications for admission for a particular academic year received after the Closing Date for that year will be considered in accordance with our school's

Admissions Policy, the Education Admissions to School Act 2018 and any regulations made under that Act.

Applicants should note that the school is usually heavily oversubscribed and any such places that are available will normally be allotted to applications received before the Closing Date.

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**

15.1. 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 based on the fact that the school is a special school, and as such it does not have a particular intake group as many mainstream schools do. Applications are accepted from children aged between 5 and 18 each year. Applications are treated as applications for particular classes. At an early stage of the application process, a child is assigned to a class based on the child's age. Class groupings vary from year to year as students leave the school or move to other schools.

15.2. 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:

*All applications for admission for a particular academic year received after the start of the academic year will be treated as a Mid-Year Application for that year and will be considered in accordance with our school's Admissions Policy, the Education (Admissions to School) Act 2018 and any regulations made under that Act. Applicants should note that the school is usually heavily oversubscribed and there are rarely if ever any vacancies during the school year. Vacancies are normally filled from waiting list operated by the school in accordance with the procedures above. Mid-year applications which meet the Criteria above will be placed on the Waiting List in accordance with their scores on the Assessment Criteria.*

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

The Board of Management of 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 admission of a student in the school.

## **17. Arrangements regarding students not attending religious instruction**

A written request should be made to the principal of the school. A meeting will then be arranged with the parent(s) to discuss how the request may be accommodated by the school.

## **18. Reviews/appeals**

### **18.1. Review of decisions by the Board of Management**

- 18.1.1. 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.
- 18.1.2. 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.
- 18.1.3. 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.
- 18.1.4. **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.
- 18.1.5. 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.

### **18.2. Right of appeal**

- 18.2.1. 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.
- 18.2.2. 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.
- 18.2.3. 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.
- 18.2.4. 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).
- 18.2.5. 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)

18.2.6. 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.

18.2.7. 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.

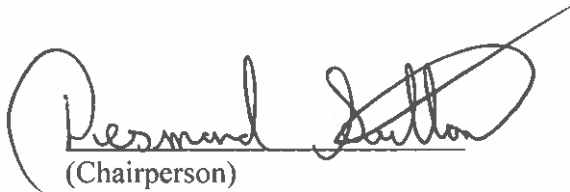
**This Admission Policy was approved by the Patron; Bishop Denis Nulty on 5/12/2023**

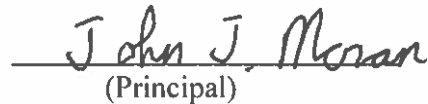
Diocese of Kildare & Leighlin

Approved

December 2023

This Admission Policy was ratified by the Board of Management of St Francis' on 5/12/23

  
(Chairperson)

  
(Principal)