

St Oliver's Special School



Enrolment Policy

1. Introduction

The Board of Management of St Oliver's Special School, Tuam, hereby sets out its Enrolment Policy in accordance with the provisions of the Education Act 1998. The Board of Management trusts that by doing so parent/guardians will be assisted in relation to enrolment matters. The Chairperson of the Board of Management and the Principal will be happy to clarify any matters arising from the policy. Decisions in relation to applications for enrolment are made by the Board of Management of the school and the Special Educational Needs Officer.

2. Rationale

This policy aims to ensure that the appropriate procedures are in place to enable the school:

- To make decisions on all applications in an open and transparent manner consistent with the Ethos, the Mission Statement of the school and Patron Body, and all legislative requirements.
- To make an accurate and appropriate assessment of the capacity of the school to cater for the needs of applicants in the light of the resources available to it.
- To put in place a framework which will ensure effective and productive relations between pupils, parents/guardians and teachers where a pupil is enrolled in the school.

3. General School Information

St Oliver's Special School

The Glebe

Tuam

Roll No.: 20330J

Phone No.: 093 24402

E-mail: info@stoliversschool.ie

The school operates within the regulations as outlined in the Rules for National School and the relevant circulars by the Department of Education and Skills. It is funded by grants from the Department of Education and Skills and supplemented by Ability West, the Patron Body. Teachers, Special Needs Assistants, Ancillary Services, and Bus Escorts are resourced by the Department of Education. The Nurse and General Assistant are resourced by Ability West.

School starts at 9.20am and finishes at 3.00pm for all pupils over the age of seven. School starts at 9.20am and finishes at 2.00pm for all students in the Early Intervention class and those within the age bracket for junior and senior infant classes.

Designation - The school provides education for pupils whose primary assessed disability is a severe to profound general learning disability. The school also caters for children with moderate multiple diagnosis, moderate general learning disability and an additional diagnosis e.g. Autism or Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties. The school depends on grants, teacher resources and other staffing resources provided by the Department of Education. The school operates within the regulations laid down, by the Department of Education. The school falls under the administration of the Primary/Special Education Sections of the Department of Education.

Catchment Area - This school caters for children living in the North Galway region. A pupil will be considered for placement in this school if the pupil lives within the designated catchment area as defined by the Special Educational Needs Officer and meet the criteria.

Staffing - The school currently has 1 Principal, 5 class teachers and 12 Special Needs Assistants. The school also employs 9 Bus Escorts, a school secretary and a cleaner. Ability West employs a nurse and general assistant.

Gender Balance and Age Profile - The school is a co-educational school catering for pupils aged 4 to 18 years, with an early intervention class catering for 2 ½ to 6 year olds. The Board of Management is bound by the Department of Education Rules for National Schools which provides that pupils may only be enrolled from the age of 4 years and upwards, though compulsory attendance does not apply until the age of 6 years and students should not exceed 18 years by September 1st of the final school year. To facilitate this age band, the range of classes taught are based on relevant and appropriate peer groupings. There are currently 4 classes within the school and 1 Early Intervention Autism class.

School Curriculum - The school follows the curricular programmes prescribed by the Department of Education for pupils with a severe to profound general learning disability, amended from time to time, in accordance with Section 9 and 30 of the Education Act (1998), in order to provide an appropriate education for each child. As of the 2015/2016 academic year, pupils in the senior class also follow the ASDAN programme, a recognised certified programme. The curricular programmes provided by the school are adapted to meet the particular special education needs of each child, and an eclectic approach to learning using a variety of methodologies and strategies are adopted to maximise the pupils' learning potential. All pupils have an Individual Education Plan designed specifically for them annually.

School Calendar - The school operates a school calendar which is effective from the week in which the 1st September falls with traditional openings and closings at Summer, Christmas, Easter and Mid Terms as laid down in Circulars issued by the Department of Education regarding Standardisation of The School Year.

School Multi-Disciplinary Team (M.D.T) - In addition to fulfilling the formal role of School Patron, as required by the Department of Education, Ability West provides clinical supports to the school in the form of a multidisciplinary team which combines the expertise from the fields of Psychology, Social Work, Speech and Language Therapy, Physiotherapy and Occupational Therapy, Paediatrician and Dietician. Access to the MDT is on a referral basis. Referrals are then prioritised. All new referrals will be discussed with the Team in the spring and summer terms for enrolment for the following September.

Early Intervention Autism Class - St. Oliver's Special School has an Early Intervention Autism class catering for a maximum of six students between the ages of 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ and 6 with a diagnosis of autism.

4. Enrolment Procedures

Parents can contact the school in person, in writing or by telephone with an expression of interest in having their child enrolled. The school also accepts expressions of interest and referrals from the following on behalf of parents:

- Early Intervention Networks
- Ability West Psychology Department
- Western Care Psychology Department

- HSE

An Invitation for Referrals (Appendix A) and a Summary of Needs Form (Appendix B) issues to the above personnel.

Parents are invited to visit the school and visit the appropriate classroom. Following this, should they wish to have their child considered for enrolment, they must complete and Application Form (Appendix C). This form must be included to be considered for admission. All information provided will be processed as per the Data Protection Policy. This application form must be returned before the closing date for applications for the particular year of entry. This date is available from the school office, and is usually falls on the first Friday in March. Where application forms are received after that time, the application may be considered as part of the applications process for the following year of entry.

At the discretion of the Board of Management and, on receipt of an application form, exceptions are made for families relocating to the catchment area during the school year.

Places are offered in accordance with our enrolment policy. Parents must accept/reject the offer by the date specified so that a place can be offered to the next suitable applicant on the waiting list.

Places are only offered when parents/guardians have agreed in writing to abide by the school's Code of Behaviour.

The following procedures will apply to all applications for enrolment in the school:

- Parents send a letter/e-mail or make a telephone request for admission to the school;
- Parents are sent a copy of the Enrolment Policy, the Code of Behaviour and an Application Form;
- Parents are asked to return the following:
 - Completed Application Form
 - Psychological Reports
 - Any other available professional reports* such as:
 - Speech & Language Therapy Report
 - Occupational Therapy Report
 - Social Work Report
 - Recent School Report

- Behaviour Guidelines
- Psychiatric Report
- Paediatric Report

*Please note that all reports relating to the child which have been created within the past three years must be submitted. Failure to do so may invalidate the application.

- Following receipt of these documents the Admissions Committee comprising of the Chairperson of the Board of Management, the principal, the head of Psychology Department and the head of Social Work Department in Ability West will arrange a meeting to determine the allocation of places, as per the criteria as set out below. The Admissions Committee, having considered each application submits the list of names to the Board of Management prior to offering places for their consideration and decision. The Board of Management reserves the right to refuse admission based on the advice of the Admissions Committee and taken into consideration the criteria as outlined below.
- If the board decides to enrol a child, a letter of offer will be sent to parents along with application forms for transport and SNA support. This letter of offer will be issued within 21 days of the closing date for applications. The offer will be subject to parents/guardians providing written agreement for their child to adhere to the school's Code of Behaviour. If the board decides not to enrol a child the parents will also be informed within 21 days of the closing date for applications.
- Parents will be requested to respond by a specified date so that the school can meet the NCSE deadlines for applications for school transport and SNA support, if applicable.
- If the child meets the enrolment criteria outlines below, but either the number of applicants has exceeded the vacancies available or, enrolment is refused on any other basis, parents/guardians will be informed that there is currently no place available but will be asked of they wish their child's details to be retained by the school in case of future vacancies. In such a case, parents/guardians will be advised that the school is formally declining a place to their child in the school and will advise the parents of the appeals procedure set out below.
- If the child does not meet the enrolment criteria below parents/guardians will be advised that the school is formally declining a places to their child in the school and will advise parents of the appeals procedure set out below.

5. Criteria for Consideration of Applications

Applications for admission to St Oliver's Special School will only be considered where a child meets all of the following criteria:

- The child is in the severe to profound cognitive range (as confirmed by an appropriate professional's report included in the child's application) and therefore has the ability to benefit from the education and skills programmes offered in the school.

OR

The child has a moderate multiple diagnosis i.e. moderate intellectual disability and a significant other diagnosis such as Autism or Emotional Behavioural Difficulties.

- The application was received by the closing date for applications for that particular year of entry.
- The child is at least 4 years old on the 1st of September of the year of entry or 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ years old on the 1st of September for the Early Intervention class.
- At least one of the assessment reports provided is from the last 12 months.
- The child is from the catchment area - as defined by the SENO.

If the Admissions Committee considers that a pupil satisfies the enrolment criteria set out above, it will assess the application on the basis of the following criteria.

6. Criteria for Assessment of Applications

Each application will be assessed on the basis of the following:

- The child will be able to tolerate a classroom environment containing other children
- The composition, special needs and ages of the pupils currently in the class into which the child will be enrolled
- The pupil/teacher ratio will be appropriate to the needs of the child
- The Admissions Committee is satisfied that the overall needs of the child can be met in the school
- Date of receipt of application
- There is sufficient physical space in the relevant classroom
- If the child has siblings in the school
- Catchment area

7. Exceptional Circumstances Warranting Refusal of an Enrolment

Even where the enrolment criteria are met, and where the child would otherwise be eligible for admission, the school reserves the right to refuse enrolment to a pupil in exceptional cases. Such an exceptional case could arise where:

- The child has special needs such that, even with additional resources available from the Department of Education and/or the NCSE, the school cannot meet such needs and/or provide the pupil with an appropriate education.
- The members of the Admissions Committee are reasonably clear from reports and/or teacher observation, that the child poses an unacceptable risk to self or other pupils, to the school staff or to school property.
- The child has previously been expelled from St Oliver's Special School or any other school in circumstances where the Admissions Committee feels that placement in St Oliver's Special School would not be appropriate for the child.

8. Appeals Procedure

If parents are unhappy with the decision, they may appeal to the Department of Education and Skills under Section 29 of the Education Act on the official form provided by the department. Parents/guardians will be informed of their right to appeal in the letter of refusal to enrol.

Appeal forms are available to download on the Department of Education and Skills website www.education.ie. Please note that this appeal must be lodged within 42 days of receipt of the refusal of the final decision of the Board of Management to enrol a child.

9. Early Intervention Autism Class

A child must be under the age of 5 on the 31st August of the new school year to avail of a place in the Early Intervention class. In exceptional circumstances, children in this class may apply in writing to the Board of Management for an additional year. All requests will be considered following consultation with the School Principal, Class Teacher and the supporting Early Intervention Team. Only if the placement is deemed suitable for an additional year and there are exceptional circumstances as to why the child cannot move to another school or class will the request be considered. The Board of Management will convene to discuss the application and following this inform the parents/guardians in writing of the decision.

10. Code of Behaviour, Anti Bullying Policy and Restrictive Practice Policy

The school has appended the Code of Behaviour, Anti Bullying Policy and Restrictive Practice Policy to this Enrolment Policy. All parents/guardians will be required to sign an undertaking to uphold the Code of Behaviour, Anti Bullying Policy and Restrictive Practice Policy and to make all reasonable efforts to assist their children to comply with the contents of these policies. Parents/guardians will also be given a copy of the Child Protection Policy and Intimate Care Policy.

11. Review

The school is subject to the Education Act (1998), The Education Welfare Act (2000), The Education for Persons with Special Education Needs Act (2004) and all relevant Equality Legislation. The Board of Management will review its Enrolment Policy on an annual basis to ensure compliance with statutory requirements.

12. Ratification and Communication

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management on the 5th April 2017. The policy will be made available to all parents/guardians of children in the school on request. Arrangements are made to communicate the policy to all parents/guardians on application for a placement in the school.

Signed: _____ Date: _____
Chairperson, Board of Management

Signed: _____ Date: _____
Principal

Date of next review: _____