

St. Oliver's Special School



Admissions Policy

Admission Policy of St. Oliver's Special School

School Address: The Glebe, Tuam, Co. Galway

Roll number: 20330J

School Patron: Ability West

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 St. Oliver's Special 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 8th June 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. Oliver'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

This section must be completed by all schools.

St. Oliver's School is a Special School in Tuam, Co. Galway.

Education is provided for pupils aged 4 to 18 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. There is an Early Intervention class for children from 3 to 5 years old with a diagnosis of Autism.

As a Department of Education School, a full educational curriculum is delivered by Teachers and supported by Special Needs Assistants.

St. Oliver's School operates under the patronage of Ability West. Ability West provides the school with the additional support of a multi-disciplinary team of professionals who assist the children to assess their curriculum and with all other aspects of their development. Ability West employs a nurse to be on-site full-time school hours, 5 days a week to assist with the children's medical needs.

At St. Oliver's Special School, staff are trained in and implement a variety of approaches to assist the children in their development. These include, PECS, TEACCH and Lámh. We also offer door to door escorted transport provided by Bús Éireann and hot meals are provided daily.

In accordance with S.15 (2) (b) of the Education Act, 1998 the Board of Management of St. Oliver's Special School shall uphold, and be accountable to the patron for 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.

Please see St. Oliver's Special School Mission Statement and general objectives of the school below:

Or mission at St. Oliver's Special School is to create a positive and nurturing environment within which each child is safe and happy while providing access to a broad and balanced curriculum which is differentiated appropriately to facilitate the needs and abilities of each unique child so that in doing so we will enable each child to reach their full potential.

3. Admission Statement

St. Oliver's Special 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 School

St. Oliver's Special 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.

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

Special School

St. Oliver's Special School with the approval of the Minister for Education and Skills, provides an education exclusively for students with severe and profound intellectual disability or moderate multiple intellectual disability (i.e. autism plus moderate intellectual disability)

For the purposes of this policy our Intake Classes are Class 1 for children with a diagnosis of Autism between the ages of 3 - 5 years of age and Class 2 for students ages 4 and over with severe and profound intellectual disability or a moderate multiple diagnosis. Older students may transition from other schools to Class 3, Class 4, Class 5 or Class 6. There is a maximum of six pupils in each class in St.Oliver's Special School.

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. Oliver's Special School provides an education exclusively for students with severe and profound or moderate multiple intellectual 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:

Selection criteria in St. Oliver's Special School is as follows:

- Class availability - the application will match the class group when the space(s) is available (i.e. cannot offer a space to a 14 year old student if the space available is in Class 2)
- Availability of places that are in 'age appropriate' classes e.g. junior, middle, senior classes as St. Oliver's Special School pupils age range from 4 to 18 years.
- Location/Address - the applicant that is within the catchment area of the school (as outlined by the SENO)
- Past Pupils - an applicant who was previously enrolled in the Early Intervention Class in St. Oliver's Special School and is now returning to enroll in the main school

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:

Where two or more applications are tied in the foregoing selection process St. Oliver's Special School will apply a random lottery to assign any available spaces to applications for places in the school, or on the waiting list.

In the case of twins applying for enrolment and one space being available, the first born twin will be offered a place.

This 'lottery draw' will be done by two members of the Schools Board of Management and witnessed by an independent observer for transparency.

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:

Points (a) to (g) must be included here by all schools. There are limited exceptions to some of these (highlighted in red below) and schools must retain the exceptions that apply to them and delete those that do not:

- (a) a student's prior attendance at a preschool or pre-school service, including naíonraí, other than in relation to a student's prior attendance at St. Oliver's Special School Early Intervention Class
- (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 meeting the criteria for the specific disability designation of the the 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

All decisions on applications for admission to St. Oliver's Special 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.)

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.

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

In accepting an offer of admission from St. Oliver's Special 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 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. Oliver's Special 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.

St. Oliver's Special School may share information with other Special Schools and ASD classes in the catchment area in relation to admission of new 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. Oliver's Special 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. Oliver's Special 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.

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 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 applications 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 applications will be offered a place if there is a 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

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:

For students hoping to transition to St. Oliver's Special School from another school the Application Process for enrolment in all classes follows the same process as new admissions.

The school will advise all parents/guardians that are seeking a place in St. Oliver's Special School for their child, in years other than the schools' intake group, to view our admissions policy and annual admissions notice. The specific and important dates will be included in these documents for the future years' intake of pupils.

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:

Admissions to St. Oliver's Special School during the school year are only accepted in emergency situations.

The following selection process is as follows:

- The student meet the school designation as set out by the NCSE
- The School's Code of Behaviour is read, accepted and signed by parents
- Class availability - the application will match the class group when the space(s) is available (i.e. cannot offer a space to a 14 year old student if the space available is in Class 2)
- Depending on the student's needs or the class situation, the Principal and Board of Management will introduce a Phased Transition Period for any new student moving into a new class mid-year. It is essential to allow for a period of adjustment in this situation. This may be over a two week or four week period depending on the needs of the student.

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

The board of St. Oliver's Special School or any persons acting on its behalf will not charge fees for or seek payment or contributions 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. 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. This review must be requested within three weeks of the parent receiving notification of a school placement for their child being declined.

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. This review must be requested within three weeks of the parent receiving notification of a school placement for their child being declined.

The Board of Management will review each appeal using an agreed set of procedures set out by the school.

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.

Ratification and Communication:

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management on 20th May 2020. The policy will be made available to all school staff and to parents/guardians of children wishing to enroll their son/daughter in St. Oliver's Special School.

Signed: David Joyner Signed: 20/05/2020.
Chairperson Board of Management Principal

Date: Maneta Adan Date: 20/5/2020

Date of next review: May 2022