



# **ST. FINIAN'S NATIONAL SCHOOL**

## **PRINCIPAL: MRS. ELAINE STANLEY**

### **Admissions Policy**

#### **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 in September 2025. 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.Finian's National 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**

St.Finian's National School is a Catholic co-educational primary school with a Catholic ethos under the patronage of the Archbishop of Armagh, Eamon Martin.

"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:

- (e) the full and harmonious development of all aspects of the person of the pupil, including the intellectual, physical, cultural, moral and spiritual aspects; and
- (f) a living relationship with God and with other people; and

(g) a philosophy of life inspired by belief in God and in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus; and

(h) 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.Finian's National 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.

## Vision Statement

It is the vision of St. Finian's N.S. Dillonstown to foster a caring environment where children will be enabled to achieve their full potential.

## Mission Statement

It is the mission of St. Finian's N.S. Dillonstown to be a place where children will attain their full potential in an atmosphere of acceptance, security, respect and learning. We hope that each child will leave with a knowledge of their own worth and an appreciation of the world around them, the rights of all pupils, and spiritual awareness. We hope that each child will have the skills to lead a fulfilled, creative and gainful life. All members of our school community uphold our mission motto;

*"Respect, Learn, Grow Together"*

## 3. Admission Statement

St.Finian's National 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.

St.Finian's National School is a school that has established two Autism classes, with the approval of the Minister for Education and Skills, which provides an education exclusively for students on the Autism Spectrum (ASD) category of special educational needs specified by the Minister and may refuse to admit to the class a student who does not have the category of needs specified.

St.Finian's National School is a Catholic 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.

St.Finian's National 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 Education Needs Act 2004 relating to the provision of education to children with special education needs, including in particular by the provision and operation of a special class or classes when requested to do so by the Council.

St.Finian's National 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.

#### **4. Categories of Special Educational Needs catered for in the special class**

St.Finian's National School, with the approval of the Minister for Education and Skills has established two Autism Classes to exclusively provide education for children on the Autism Spectrum (ASD).

#### **5. Admission of Students**

This school shall admit each student seeking admission except where –

- a) the school is oversubscribed (please see section 5. 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
- c) The Autism Classes attached to St.Finian's National School provide an education exclusively for students on the Autism spectrum (ASD) and the school may refuse admission to this class, where the student concerned does not have the specified category of special educational needs provided for in this class and/or does not fit the criterion set by the Department of Education and Youth.

#### **6. Oversubscription**

The fundamental factor which determines the Admissions' policy of our school is equality of access. No child is refused admission for reasons of ethnicity, special educational needs, disability, language, gender, traveller status, asylum seeker/refugee status, religious/political beliefs and values, family or social circumstances.

In order to maintain and respect the rights of the existing school community, balanced judgements guided by the principles of natural justice and acting in the best interests of all children, will be exercised when considering applications. The Board of Management therefore reserves the right to determine the maximum number of children in each separate classroom bearing in mind:

- Criteria set down by the Department of Education and Skills
- Children must be 4 on or before the 31<sup>st</sup> of August the year they start school
- Available space in classrooms
- Educational needs of children of a particular age
- Multi-Grade classes
  
- Presence of children with special educational/behavioural needs

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.

- Brothers and sisters (including step-siblings residing at the same address) of children already enrolled in the school-priority to the eldest
- Children living in the parish - priority to eldest
- Children of current staff
- Children whose home address is closest to the school (as measured on Google Maps), if the child is normally a resident outside the parish

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:

- A lottery system will apply with all concerned present.

## **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 student's prior attendance at a preschool or pre-school service, including naíonraí, other than the School's Autism Class
- the payment of fees or contributions (howsoever described) to the school;
- a student's academic ability, skills or aptitude other than in relation to the Autism Classes insofar as it is necessary to ascertain whether or not the student has the category of special educational needs (ASD) concerned
- the occupation, financial status, academic ability, skills or aptitude of a student's parents;
- a requirement that a student, or his or her parents, attend an interview, open day or other meeting as a condition of admission;
- a student's connection to the school by virtue of a member of his or her extended family attending or having previously attended the school;
- 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 31<sup>st</sup> January 2026 only).

## **8. Decisions on applications**

All decisions on applications for admission to St.Finian's National 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 (see Section 16 below for further details).

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

In accepting an offer of admission from St.Finian's National 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 St.Finian's National 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.

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;

- (v) 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 an 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.Finian's National 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.Finian's National 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.

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.

### **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 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 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**

Students are welcome to apply for admission to the school at any time during the school year, if newly resident in the area. Applications are subject to the criteria outlined in Section 6.

### **16. Reviews/appeals**

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

The parent of 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.

## **17. ASD Admission Policy and Procedures**

St.Finian's National School is a mainstream national school with two Autism Classes.

### **Our Aim**

Our Autism Classes aim to offer an autism specific learning environment within a mainstream national school. We aim to facilitate students with Autism in our local area.

This setting facilitates optimum inclusion as part of the school community with access to mainstream activities as appropriate to each child's needs/abilities.

### **Enrolment Forms**

An Enrolment Application Form provided by the school should be fully completed by the parents/guardians on behalf of the child with AUTISM class clearly marked.

### **Criteria for Enrolment in ASD Class**

Subject to sufficient places being made available in the Autism Class, children and young people are eligible for enrolment in a special class for autism when the following is provided in support of such an application:

#### **Professional report(s) outlining:**

- Diagnosis of special educational needs (e.g. Autism: DSMIV/V or ICD 10/11 (psychologist, psychiatrist, multi-disciplinary report)

#### **AND**

- A demonstration of understanding of complexity of the child's overall level of need/s evidenced in the professional reports.

#### **AND**

- Given the severity or complexity of the child's support needs, a clear professional recommendation as to what educational placement type would be most appropriate to best meet the child's needs, along with rationale for same

#### **AND**

- An eligibility letter from the NCSE confirming that the child is known to them and that the child has the required diagnosis and recommendation for a special class for autism.

## **Enrolment Process Step By Step**

1. When an enquiry is made concerning a placement in an Autism class, the following is required in order to proceed:

- **An expression of Interest form** - available on the school website
- **An eligibility letter from the SENO** - applications available on the 'Parents Notify' section on [www.ncse.ie](http://www.ncse.ie)
- **School Application Form** can be requested once the parent has received an eligibility letter
- **Professional Reports** specifying that the child meets all the requirements to attend an Autism Class.

2. In the event of the number of applicants seeking enrolment exceeding the number of places available, children will be placed on the **Autism Class Waiting List**.

3. If places become available, they will be allocated by applying the following criteria in descending order of importance:

- Children currently enrolled in our mainstream classes in St.Finian's N.S. who fulfill required criteria outlined above
- Children living in the parish of Togher - priority to the eldest
- Children whose home address is closest to the school (as measured on Google Maps), if the child is normally a resident outside the parish

4. Once a place has been offered in the Autism Class, it is a requirement by the school that a written response from parents/guardians is sent within two weeks, to confirm acceptance of the place **pending approval of Notification of Enrolment by the NCSE.**

5. The parents/guardians of the child **must** accept and agree to the school's Code of Behaviour and the terms of this policy. Upon receiving the offer of a place, parents/guardians will be required to meet with the enrolment team in the school.

**Please note that fulfilling the enrolment criteria does not necessarily ensure enrolment if sufficient places are not available and/or sufficient classroom space is not available.**

## **Behaviour**

It is acceptable that a child with Special Educational Needs may display difficult, defiant or oppositional behaviours. All efforts will be made by the school to manage such behaviours, using various strategies and through the implementation of the child's Continuum of Support Plan. All pupils are subject to the School's Code of Behaviour, Behaviours of Concern Policy and Health

and Safety Statement. Where a child's behaviour impacts in a negative way on the other children in the Autism class or another mainstream class to the extent that their constitutional right to an education is being interfered with as judged by the BOM of the school, the school reserves the right to advise parents that a more suitable setting should be found for their children.

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

The board of St.Finian's National 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 enrolment of a student in the school.

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

The following are the school's arrangements for students where the parents have 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 school. A meeting will then be arranged with the parents to discuss how the request may be accommodated by the school.

This Policy was ratified by the Board of Management of St.Finian's National School.



**Chairperson of the BOM**

**26th September 2025**