

Scoil Dara - Admissions Policy

Section 1 – Our Tradition, Mission & Ethos

Our Legacy: The legacy of Nano Nagle and Edmund Rice, and by extension, the Gospel, challenges our school to be inclusive and to be especially mindful of the disadvantaged. It challenges our school to be truly a resource for the local community, to be mindful of local needs and to focus on the importance of a value based, Christian education in the Catholic tradition.

The characteristic spirit of a Presentation school is built on these values and principles and provides the context for the mission of the school, the school plan, its operating policies and the day to day work of the school. It is our desire, in Scoil Dara, to develop, publish and implement student centred admission and behaviour management policies.

Mission Statement: *Scoil Dara promotes the development of a community of faith inspired by Gospel values. The community of the school works in a holistic manner to ensure that dependence is gradually replaced by responsibility for self, society and the world. The dignity of each student, staff member and parent is honoured and reflected in school policies and structures. While educational excellence is promoted, it is the needs of the learner that directs the development of the school. We engage with alternative approaches to education especially for those most disadvantaged. The school promotes a spirit of service and care.*

Ethos: We are constantly striving to be a welcoming school. Our school is Catholic in character, inclusive in our intake and comprehensive in our curriculum. Our behaviour management strategies and structures are built on the principles of justice & fairness. We endeavour to fulfil our mission in partnership with parents, staff, students, trustees and the local community.

Section 2- Our school

Operating Context: The Board of Management and staff of Scoil Dara support the principles of

- inclusiveness,
- equality of access and participation in the school,
- parental choice in relation to enrolments
- respect for diversity of traditions, values, beliefs, languages and ways of life in society.

The school operates within the context and parameters of Department of Education & Science regulations and programmes and the funding and resources available. The school is a Presentation school and acknowledges the rights of the trustees as set out in the Education Act 1998. In particular the school is committed to the religious and educational philosophy of the Presentation Sisters.

School Resources: The financial resources of the school are provided by a combination of grants from the Department of Education & Science, voluntary contributions from parents and the parents council and fund raising. The teaching resources are provided by the Department of Education & Science and may be supplemented from time to time by the Board of Management where financial resources allow.

Admission to the school is, of course, subject to the resources available to the school including classroom accommodation, class size, teaching resources and financial resources and subject to the capacity of the school to provide for the needs of those who apply for admission. Where the school lacks the necessary resources to meet the needs of any applicant or student it will make every effort to secure those resources – where the resources cannot be secured the school reserves the unfettered right to refuse admission.

The implementation of the curriculum, the pastoral care programme, the school development plan and school policy must have due regard to resources and funding available. The school follows the curricular programmes

prescribed by the DES, which may be amended from time to time, in accordance with Sections 9 and 30 of the Education Act 1998.

School Details: Scoil Dara is a co-educational voluntary secondary school, under the trusteeship of CEIST, and grant aided by the DES. The school is managed by a Board of Management appointed by the Trustees CEIST. The Board, which operates under the Articles of Management for Catholic Voluntary Secondary Schools, comprises 8 members - four trustee nominees, two parent nominees and two teacher nominees.

The term of office of the Board of Management is three years and the current Board was appointed from mid-October 2008 to mid-October 2011. Meetings are held on a monthly basis excluding July & August.

School Organisation - Day to Day School Management Structure

Principal: *P.J. Gannon*
Deputy Principal: *Eileen Teahon*

The school has 11 Assistant Principals, 15 Special Duties Teachers, and 1 Programme Co-Ordinator. The duties of the post of responsibility holders is given in Appendix 1.

Teaching Resources: At any time there are about 45 full time subject teachers on the staff. In addition to the posts of Principal and Deputy Principal, the school has two full time guidance counsellors, a remedial teacher post, a resource teacher post and a language support teacher.

Parents' Council: Since its establishment in 1991, Scoil Dara has had a Parents Council. The term of office of the Parents' Council is for one year. The council meets monthly, although it is common for sub committees of the Parents' Council to meet between monthly meetings

Students' Council: The first students' council was established in 2001. All students participate in the election of the members of the Student Council. Voting is by PR. The Students Council meetings are chaired by the Head Boy and Head Girl.

Student Leadership: Our students are encouraged to develop their leadership skills and talents. Many of the Leaving Certificate class become prefects. MEITHEAL, a group of ten specially trained Leaving Certificate students, is an established aspect of student life in Scoil Dara. Both give a range of opportunities to exercise leadership appropriate to their age and level of maturity. Both play a part in encouraging a strong sense of responsibility in the student body.

Curriculum: The following programmes are currently offered by the school -

- Three year Junior Certificate Programme
- One year Transition Year Programme
- Two Year Traditional Leaving Certificate Programme
- Two Year Leaving Certificate Applied
- Two Year Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme
- Part Time Adult Education Programme

Extra Curricular Activities: A number of extra curricular activities are available to students thanks to the generosity of teachers and parents with the spare time and talents. Students participate in the following events annually : Athletics, Basketball Tournaments, Debating & Public Speaking, Gaelic Football Championships and Leagues, GAISCE (The President's Awards).

Adventure, Educational and Social School tours are a regular feature of school life in Scoil Dara as are social nights in the school for first years.

Other relevant information

School Opening Hours : 9.00a.m. to 3.45p.m.

School Calendar : See Appendix 3

Parent Teacher Meetings : See Appendix 4

Details of School Service Charges and Uses : See Appendix 5

Section 3: Scope, Rationale & Legal Framework

Scope: This document sets out the policy of the school in respect of admissions to the school in the following circumstances:

- Students applying for a place in First Year
- Students from outside of the school system applying for a place in any other year-group or programme
- Students applying to transfer from another second-level school
- Students applying to repeat any year of any programme within the school, including repeating the Leaving Certificate programme
- Students from within the school applying for a place on any programme within the school (e.g. Leaving Certificate Traditional, LC Applied, Transition Year, LCVP etc.)

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following

- The **Educational Philosophy of Presentation Schools** (Ireland 2002)
- The school's **Mission Statement, Ethos & Educational Aims** (See Appendix 1)
- The school's **Special Educational Needs Policy**
- The school's **Behaviour & Disciplinary Policy** (incl. **Policy on Suspension/Expulsion**)
- The school's **Attendance Strategy**

Relationship to school's Mission/Vision/Aims: Presentation schools promote the development of a community of faith inspired by Gospel values. The community of the school works in a holistic manner to ensure that student dependence is supported and assisted in growing into full responsibility for self, and role in society and the world. The dignity of each student, staff member and parent is honoured and reflected in school policies and structures, including this policy. While educational excellence is promoted, it is the needs of the learner that are paramount. Scoil Dara promotes a spirit of service and care. This policy is also informed by the school's Mission Statement which is set out in Appendix 1

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

- to make decisions on all applications in an open and transparent manner consistent with the Presentation Ethos, the Mission Statement of the School and 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 and
- to put in place a framework which will ensure effective and productive relations between students, parents and teachers where a student is admitted to the school

Legal Framework;

The legal framework for this policy is detailed in appendix 6

Goals: The school shall have in place appropriate channels of communication and procedures

- to inform parents about the school, its programmes, activities and procedures
- to enable applications for admission to the school to be handled in an open, transparent manner
- to put in place criteria under which applications shall be considered

- to ensure that these criteria are informed by Presentation Ethos, our Mission Statement & current legislation
- to specify what information is required by the school at the time of application

Section 4: Procedures – Application, Enrolment Criteria & Decision, Appeal

Application for First Year:

Our admission procedure is in keeping with the characteristic spirit of the school and is in accordance with the Religious and Educational Philosophy of the Presentation Sisters. It complies with all current legislation such as the Education Act 1998, Education Welfare Act 2000, Equal Status Act 2000.

How to Apply: Application Forms are available from the school office and are available on request. A summary of this Admissions Policy should accompany each application form – the full policy is available on request. The closing date for receipt of forms shall be the 30th November each year. Applications received after this date shall be processed in order of receipt for any available places. A timetable of the decision-making process for late applications will be sent out with the acknowledgement of receipt of each late application.

Parents should complete and sign the application form, giving all of the details required. Incomplete forms will be returned to parents. Parents should sign the application form and date it. When an application form, properly completed, is received by the school it will be marked with the date (and time if appropriate) on which it was received. Please note that parents are required to provide an emergency contact phone number.

Parents may be required to complete a further information form regarding their child's educational progress at a later date and/or to cooperate with the school's attempts to identify the educational or other relevant needs of the child. The school may wish to meet with an applicant and her/his parent(s) or guardians to discuss the needs of the applicant. A meeting may be requested by the parent(s) or guardian. In either case the school will make all reasonable effort to accommodate such a meeting prior to making a decision on an application.

The school will organise an Information Evening and / or prepare a School Handout so that parents may inform themselves about the school. The Information Evening is open to students who have been offered a place in the school. Students should be accompanied by their parent(s) or guardian(s). Attendance by a parent / guardian is obligatory and enrolment offer may be withdrawn for failure of parent / guardian to attend the Information Evening.

Failure to fully complete the application form, failure to supply any relevant documentation requested by the school or failure to make a reasonable arrangement to meet with the school to discuss the application may result in a child being refused admission to the school.

Decision Making Process: Decisions regarding admissions are a matter for the Board of Management. However, this task is normally delegated to the Principal who decides on such matters in accordance with the school's admission policy. The Principal may refer any application to the Board for decision.

Parents will be advised of the outcome of their application within 15 days of the closing date (see above).

The Board of Management will set a figure each year for the number of students to be accepted into First Year – that figure will depend on the overall number of students in the school and the overall capacity for which the school was designed, which is 875 students.

Enrolment Criteria: Except in exceptional circumstances children will be enrolled on application.

The number of places in first year shall be not more than 170 places.

Where the number of applications exceeds the number of places available, places will be allocated according to the following criteria –

- (a) Firstly, admission will be granted to students attending any of the following Primary Schools – Scoil Choca Naofa (Kilcock), St. Joseph’s BNS Kilcock, Scoil Ui Riada , Tiermohan NS, Newtown NS, Enfield NS, Coole NS, Moynalvey NS, Mulhussey NS,
- (b) In the event that the number admitted on this basis would exceed the number of places available, students who have or had a brother or sister in the school shall be given priority and the remaining places filled by lottery.

Note that secondary school students must be aged 12 on 1st January on the calendar year following the child’s entry into first year. Evidence of age, normally a Birth Certificate, will be required.

In accordance with the Education Act 1998 the school reserves the right to ensure that the Catholic Ethos of the school is maintained and in this context the religion of a student may be a determining factor.

Academic ability is not a consideration. The school welcomes students of all levels of ability. However, the school [following the Assessment Tests and any other forms of assessment deemed appropriate by the school and consultation with the appropriate primary school(s)] and the Department of Education & Science, reserves the right to determine, in line with its Special Educational Needs Policy, that it is unable to cater for the needs of a student. In such circumstances a student may be refused admission.

Right of Appeal: Where a student is refused admission to the school their parents will be advised of their right to appeal that decision to the Secretary General of the Department of Education and Science and will be supplied by the school with a copy of the Appeal Form.

Assessment Test: Students will normally be advised of the outcome of their application prior to sitting for the school’s Assessment Test. All applicants shall be obliged to sit for the school’s Assessment Test which shall be held on a day, time and place determined by the school. A candidate who fails to sit for the test without good reason (as judged by the school) supported by appropriate documentation, will put their admission at risk. In such case the Board may decide to revoke an earlier decision to admit such a student and to offer the place to a student on the Waiting List.

The Assessment Test will be used help the school to identify whether a student may have special educational needs and the results may be used as a basis for seeking additional teaching or other resources from the Department of Education & Science, in line with the school’s Special Educational Needs Policy. The Assessment Test may guide the school in its assignment of students to classes.

Section 5 - Admissions Procedures (Other Year Groups)

(including applications to transfer from other schools)

How to Apply: Application Forms are available from the school office on request. A copy of this Admissions Policy and a copy of the school’s reference form should accompany each application form.

Applicants should complete the application form, giving all of the details required. Incomplete forms will be returned to parents. Parents should sign the application form and date it. Parents are required to provide an emergency contact phone number

Applicants will be required to furnish details about their prior second-level education including copies of their last two school reports that set out the results of in-house examinations. Where an applicant has attended more than one second-level school they may be required, at the discretion of the Board, to submit reports from each school. Where appropriate applicants may be required to submit copies of the results of any state examinations.

Applicants are required to submit a reference from their previous school(s) on the reference form provided by this school. Applicants may be required to complete a further information form regarding their child's educational progress at a later date. Where the school considers it to be necessary the school may require an applicant to provide a current education psychological assessment report. Failure to complete any of the necessary documentation listed above or to supply any other relevant documentation requested by the school may result in an applicant being refused admission to the school. In certain cases, the school may waive its requirement for a reference on the school's reference form and may instead accept a reference from another school on that school's stamped headed notepaper.

Decision Making Process: Decisions regarding admissions are a matter for the Board of Management. However, this task is normally delegated to the Principal who decides on such matters in accordance with the school's admission policy. The Principal may refer any application to the Board for decision

Admissions for any school year will be considered as soon as possible after the application is received. The school will respond to each application within 21 school days of receiving it but may not be in a position to make a decision on some applications until later in the school year. This will certainly be so in the case of applications for senior cycle courses as the school may not yet have begun to survey its own students about their preferences for senior cycle.

A decision will be made in respect of each application following the timing above and the selection criteria set out below.

Enrolment Criteria: Applicants must meet any criteria laid down by the Department of Education & Science from time to time e.g. applicants must not have already spent six years at second-level or apply for a course which would necessarily result in their spending longer than six years at second level.

All students entering the school must supply a Birth Certificate or other appropriate identification as determined by the school, in due course, as set down by the school from time to time.

The behaviour record of a student in their previous school shall be an important factor. The school reserves the right to refuse to admit a student whose behaviour in their previous school has been unsatisfactory or where there has not been a satisfactory level of cooperation between the previous school and the student's parent(s) or guardian(s). The attendance record of a student in their previous school shall also be an important factor.

The overall capacity of the school is 875 students. The Board of Management is anxious to maintain the quality of education that the school provides. It has determined therefore that overall enrolment will not be allowed to rise above 875. The desired number in any year-group falls between 140 and 170.

Note re Senior Cycle: At an appropriate time each year the school will take steps to determine what are the intentions of its own students for the following school year. Students in Third Year & Transition Year will be required to complete a survey/application form indicating their intentions.

When this process is complete the school will determine whether and how many places may be available to students from outside the school. Priority will be given to students from the school who are permitted by the school, in accordance with Department regulations, to repeat a school year.

Right of Appeal: Where a student is refused admission to the school their parents will be advised of their right to appeal that decision to the Secretary General of the Department of Education and Science and will be supplied by the school with a copy of the Appeal Form.

Section 6 - Admission to specific programmes or subjects (or level)

From time to time it may arise that the demand for a particular subject, or at a specific level for any subject or for a particular programme may exceed the number of places normally available on that programme. The school will make every effort - within the constraints of the accommodation, teaching resources, accommodation and equipment – to accommodate all such students. Where all students cannot be accommodated the following shall apply

- Priority will be given to students from within the school.
- Priority will be given to students who return fully completed application forms by the dates specified by the school.

Where it is not possible to accommodate all applicants,

- entry to specific subject levels will be determined by the student's previous interest and performance at that subject relative to the other applicants; their results in state examinations where available will also be considered. Parents will be consulted.
- entry to specific subjects will be determined by reference to the preferences indicated by students on their application form and by reference to the student's previous performance at that subject relative to the other applicants; their results in state examinations where available will also be considered. Where this does not satisfactorily resolve the issue, the school may survey the students' previous teacher(s) about their suitability for the subject or alternative subjects and the school may also take into account the availability of other suitable subjects available to competing applicants. Parents will be consulted.
- entry to specific programmes will be determined following a review of the application forms and an interview process designed to ascertain the suitability of the applicants for the specific programme. Where this does not satisfactorily resolve the issue, the school may survey the students' previous teachers about their suitability for the programme. The school may also take into account the availability of other suitable courses within the school to competing applicants.
- Students from other schools wishing to transfer to Scoil Dara will have their applications considered and decided upon only after the final date for Scoil Dara students to select their programmes for the following school year.

Admission to repeat a year except Leaving Certificate: All such applications are subject to the relevant Department of Education & Science Guidelines. The Department normally restricts students to a maximum of six years at second level and does not allow students to repeat a year unless there are exceptional circumstances.

- Applications to repeat a year will be considered in the light of DES Circulars & Guidelines.
- Applications will also be considered in the light of places available on the relevant programme, subject to the class size and overall enrolment restrictions set out elsewhere in this policy.
- Applications must be on the school's application form
- Applications must be accompanied by supporting documentation as appropriate.
- Applications will not be considered until the written application and supporting documentation have been submitted to the school.
- Students repeating a programme will be given equal priority in terms of subject and programme choices with students taking the programme or subject for the first time
- The school reserves the confine facilities for sitting the Junior Certificate and Leaving Certificate examinations to its own students, its own students who are repeating the Leaving Certificate after having taken this examination on the first occasion in Scoil Dara, and other students whom the Board deem to be special cases.

Admission to repeat the Leaving Certificate Programme: The school does not operate a Repeat Leaving Certificate Programme. It does not normally provide any additional teaching to cover material normally covered in 5th Year. Students who apply to repeat the Leaving Certificate at the school will be considered

- in the light of places available in the relevant subjects, the overall programme and overall enrolment

- within the school
- in the light of the students previous academic record, application to studies, attendance etc

Appeals Procedures: All applicants will receive a written answer to their request as set out above. Where possible, this will be done within 21 days of receipt of the application. Where it is not possible to make a decision on an application at the time it is received, the procedures to be followed will be explained in writing to the applicant within 21 days of receipt of the application.

A decision to refuse admission may be appealed to the Department of Education & Science under Section 29 of the Education Act. The name and address of the persons to whom an appeal should be addressed will be included in the notification to refuse admission, as will the time constraints involved. An Appeal Form will be enclosed with the letter

Success Criteria: The applications process is managed effectively each year. There is clarity and transparency about the process. Applicants are informed in good time about the status of their application and, where an application is refused in accordance with this policy, have reasonable opportunity to make alternative arrangements for their child(ren).

Review Procedures: The policy will be reviewed regularly and by the full staff and Board of Management every five years. Any staff member, board member, parent, guardian or student who is unhappy with the content or the implementation of any school policy may request a review at any time and such a request will be dealt with as quickly as possible. Next Review will occur during the school year _____.

Trustee Approval: On adoption of the policy by the Board and on each subsequent review, the policy will be forwarded to the Education Office for approval by the Trustees.

APPENDIX 6

Legal Framework: Section 9 (j) of the **Education Act 1998** specifies, that “A recognised school shall subject to this Act and in particular section 15 (2) (d), establish and maintain an admissions policy which provides for maximum accessibility to the school.”

Section 15 (2) (d) states that Boards of Management shall “publish.....the policy of the school concerning admission to and participation in the school and ensure that as regards that policy principles of equality and the right of parents to send their children to a school of the parents' choice are respected”

Section 27 (1) states that “A board shall establish and maintain procedures for the purposes of informing students in a school of the activities of the school” and (2) that “ the procedures established and maintained under subsection (1) shall facilitate the involvement of the students in the operation of the school, having regard to the age and experience of the students, in association with their parents and teachers”.

The **Education Welfare Act, 2000** [Section 19 (1)] requires that a Board of Management shall not refuse to admit a child except where such refusal is in accordance with the school's Admission Policy. Section 19 (2) requires that parents must provide relevant information to the school while Section 19 (3) requires that the Board of Management shall, as soon as practicable (but not later than 21 days) after receiving such information “

make a decision in respect of the application concerned and inform the parent in writing thereof ”

The **Equal Status Act, 2000** [Sections 5 & 7 (2)] prohibits discrimination on the grounds of “gender, marital status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, race or membership of the Travelling Community” regarding admission, access to programmes, participation in the school or regarding expulsion or any other sanction. There are limited exceptions regarding single-sex schools and schools promoting particular religious values [Section 7 (3)]. However, section 3.3 states that “Treating a person who has not attained the age of 18 years less favourably or more favourably than another, whatever that other person's age, shall not be regarded as discrimination on the age ground.” Section 3.4 states that “For the purposes of this Act discrimination includes a refusal or failure by the provider of a service to do all that is reasonable to accommodate the needs of a person with a disability by providing special treatment or facilities, if without such special treatment or facilities it would be impossible or unduly difficult for the person to avail himself or herself of the service.”

Appendix 7

Special Needs Policy: The school's Special Needs Policy sets out how the school will

- take steps at an early stage to identify children with special needs who may be applying for admission to the school, and to become familiar with their needs.
- request a copy of the child's medical/psychological report/individual educational plan, if available or
- request immediate assessment (in order to assist the school in establishing educational and training needs of the child relevant to his/her disability or special needs and to profile the support services required.
- request, in a timely manner, from the DES any additional resources deemed necessary e.g. special needs assistant, specialised equipment or furniture, transport etc.
- meet the parents to discuss the child's needs and school's capacity to meet the child's needs.
- through the Board of Management, do all it possibly can to identify, plan, and provide for the needs of a special needs or disabled child seeking admission to the school.

PARENT – TEACHER MEETINGS 2009-10

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| 1 st Year: | Tuesday 19 th January 2010 | (9.00a.m. – 12.00noon) (Morning) |
| 2 nd Year: | Thursday 12 th November 2009 | (4.15p.m. – 6.45p.m.) (Evening) |
| 3 rd Year: | Thursday 3 rd November 2009 | (4.15p.m. – 6.45p.m.) (Evening) |
| 5 th Year: (Incl LCA & TY) | Thursday 28 th January 2010 | (4.15p.m. – 6.45p.m.) (Evening) |
| 6 th Year: | Wednesday 16 th December 2009 | (9.00a.m. – 1.00pm) (Morning) |