

Introduction

Scoil Dara promotes the development of a community of faith inspired by Gospel Values as a co-educational, voluntary secondary school under the trusteeship of Ceist. The school was formed in 1991 when the two voluntary secondary schools in Kilcock, Scoil Iosa (girls) and Meanscoil Iosaif (boys) amalgamated. The school operates within the regulations laid down by the Department of Education and Skills (hereafter referred to as the DES) and the Board of management consisting of Trustee nominees, nominees from the community of parents/guardians and nominees from among the teaching professionals in the school.

Under Section 23 of the Education (Welfare) Act 2000, the Board of Management of each school must prepare and make available an Admissions Policy. This policy has been developed in accordance with the Guidelines issued by the National Educational Welfare Board, hereafter referred to as the NEWB Guidelines and those issued by Túsla – The Child and Family Agency. The policy has been drawn up in consultation with all the school partners, including the Board of Management, school staff, students and parents/guardians. It takes cognisance of the responsibility of the school to ensure that all of its students are educated in a happy, safe, respectful and optimal learning environment.

Scoil Dara endeavours to provide an appropriate education for all students. The community of the school works in a holistic manner to guide and support students as they move toward independence, self-knowing, responsible citizenship, spiritual growth and in their progress toward finding meaning in life and sustaining positive relationships. The dignity of each student, staff member and parent is honoured and reflected in the policies and systems in the School. Policies and systems are reviewed on a regular basis and are agreed across the stakeholders (students, teachers, parents, School Management, Board of Management and trustees) to ensure that they represent the common good, ensure the health and safety of all and are cognisant of context and current social trends and issues.

Educational excellence, where students come to understand and strive toward their full potential academically and in the development of key skills is central to the work of the school. The needs of each learner are recognised as an integral part of helping students understand themselves and recognise their individual capacity. As educators, the staff at Scoil Dara, engage in a variety of teaching methodologies and strategies so that the teaching and learning is inclusive, effective and flexible.

Mission Statement

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 to 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 direct the development of the school. The school promotes a spirit of service and care

Principles

Scoil Dara is a student-centred school, where support is given to each student to:

- recognise their belonging to a community of support and care.
- experience success
- feel affirmed in achieving their individual best
- value hard work, positive effort and creativity
- receive encouragement toward attaining their goals
- access support and guidance in their personal, academic and social development
- become confident and self-aware
- endeavour to become the best that they can be
- offer support and care for others
- identify their innate attributes and skills and strive to develop them
- understand the responsibilities associated with community involvement and inclusion, respecting all other members of the school community

Admissions & Equality Statement:

Scoil Dara subscribes to the legislative principles of partnership, transparency, inclusion, accountability, respect for diversity, respect for parental choice and equality. Scoil Dara will not discriminate against an application for admission on the grounds of disability, special educational needs, sexual orientation, family status, membership of the traveller community, race, civil status, gender, faith or religious tradition or on the grounds of the student being of no faith. In addition, this policy also takes cognisance of the responsibility of Scoil Dara to ensure a learning environment where all its students can be educated in a happy, safe, and respectful environment. While recognising the desire of parents/guardians to enrol their son/daughter in the school of their choice, Scoil Dara is responsible for the protection of the existing school community and, the students already enrolled. This requires balanced judgements, whilst acting in the best interests of all students.

School Uniform

Scoil Dara is very proud of its students and the school uniform which clearly identifies and distinguishes them. The school uniform is a huge part of our identity as a community of learners. The students of Scoil Dara wear their uniform with pride and honour. This policy should be read in conjunction with the Uniform Code (available on the school website or from the school). It is understood that students choosing to enrol in Scoil Dara will accept and fully comply with the Uniform Code (including the correct footwear and school jacket).

Code of Behaviour

Our priority in Scoil Dara is to ensure a safe, positive, supportive and optimal educational environment for all. Consequently, high expectations will be communicated to and required from all students and members of the school community. It is an essential prerequisite of enrolment in Scoil Dara that the Code of Behaviour is accepted in writing on admission. The Code of Behaviour (including future revisions) as approved by the Board of Management must be fully complied with for the duration of the student's enrolment in the school. This commitment must be renewed annually by signing the relevant contracts in the school journal at the start of each year. It is essential that parents/guardians work in collaboration and partnership with the school to ensure that it is a safe place of optimal learning for all.

All offers of places in Scoil Dara are conditional upon the parents/guardians and students signing up and committing to the school Code of Behaviour (including future and revised editions) for the duration of the students' time in the school. This is in accordance with Section 23(4) of the Education Welfare Act 2000.

Scope:

This policy applies to:

- Students (6th class) who wish to enrol in first year in Scoil Dara for the following academic year
- Students of Scoil Dara who wish to apply for entry into/participation in a curricular programme
- Students who apply to transfer from another school

Policy Context and Rationale

The purpose of this Admissions and Participation Policy is to provide fair, transparent and effective criteria for the admission of students to Scoil Dara and in compliance with the legislative requirements. It is also intended to clarify issues related to the enrolment and participation of students in the school and to facilitate the enrolment process.

The Legislative Context

The most significant educational and equality legislation in Ireland is relatively new, complementary and should not be read in isolation. The main pieces of legislation pertaining to school enrolment and equality of access to schools include:

- The Education Act (1998)
- The Educational Welfare Act (2000)
- The Equality Acts (2000-2004)
- The Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act (2004)

In the context of enrolment, the Education Act 1998 aims to promote (i) “equality of access to and participation in education and to promote the means whereby students may benefit from education” and (ii) “the right of parents to send their children to a school of the parents’ choice having regard to the rights of patrons and the effective and efficient use of resources” (Objects of the Education Act 1998 (c) & (e))

The Equal Status Acts (2000-2004) are set within the wider context of EU Anti-Discrimination Directives. The present Equality Acts legislate against discrimination on nine grounds (gender, marital status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, race, disability and membership of the Travelling community).

The Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act (the EPSEN Act) (2004) promotes the education of students with special educational needs within an inclusive environment and sets forth many strategies for facilitating consensus on inclusion specific to SEN’s.

While recognising the desire of parents/guardians to enrol their son/daughter in the school of their choice, the management of Scoil Dara is responsible for the protection and rights of the existing school community and the efficient use of resources provided by the DES. Consequently, the management of Scoil Dara reserves the right to determine the maximum number of students in each year group it shall admit in any one academic year.

Procedure for Admission into First Year in Scoil Dara

Information regarding the commencement of the enrolment procedure are communicated on the school website, via the feeder primary schools and published in the local parish newsletter each year. All applicants **must** fully complete the relevant official **Enrolment Application form** (available from the school office and website; year specific) and submit it with all supporting documentation and signatures by the deadline as stated on the form. Late applications will only be considered where places remain available. The commencement date for submission of completed application forms for First Year is the first Thursday in October each year. The school will not accept any forms submitted before this date and accepts no responsibility for any forms prior to the commencement date for submission. **The enrolment deadline is 14 days after enrolment opens.**

Application forms will only be processed when fully completed and accompanied by all supporting/requested documentation. There is a checklist at the end of the Enrolment Application form to assist parents/guardians in ensuring that they have fully completed the form. It is the responsibility of parents/guardians to ensure that the application is complete before submission to the school. It is also the responsibility of parents/guardians to ensure that they complete the application process before the deadline. The submission of an enrolment application form is not a guarantee of an offer of enrolment.

Eligibility for admission to Scoil Dara includes the following Department of Education and skills regulations:

- Students from other countries to have reached a comparable standard of education decided by the Board of Management in consultation with the Department of Education and Skills and other relevant authorities
- Reached twelve years of age by 1st January in the year of entry (in accordance with DES regulations) but should be no older than their peers than is appropriate (as determined on an individual case basis by the Board of Management)

Places will be allocated in accordance with the selection process as outlined on the following pages.

Provisional offers of a place will be posted to successful applicants during the week commencing on the Third Monday in October. Successful applicants will be requested to sign an official *acceptance form* (included with letter of offer) and return it to the school by the date specified on the letter of offer. If parents/guardians have not accepted the offer of a place within the specified time, then the offer will be deemed ***null and void*** and the place will be offered to another student.

The offer of a place in Scoil Dara is fully conditional on the following:

- The provision of true and accurate information on the enrolment application form.
- Fraudulent applications based on catchment area may lead to the student being excluded if such a fraud later comes to light.
- The provision of a valid PPSN number for the student applicant
- The submission of all relevant documentation and information as requested by the school for enrolment
- The signing of a written undertaking by the parent/guardian and the students of all the schools policies (including the Code of Behaviour and Uniform Code) for the duration of their time in Scoil Dara
- The student does not accept a place in **any other post-primary school**

The Decision-Making Process

All decisions in relation to enrolment in Scoil Dara are made by the Board of Management of the school or its nominee (the Principal) in accordance with this policy and the relevant legislation (as previously described). In the normal course of events, enrolment in Scoil Dara will be ratified as a matter of course by the Principal. In situations where this is not the case, the Principal will refer the particular case to the Board of Management for consideration.

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.

The Selection Process for Enrolment in First Year

Places will be allocated following a selection process which consists of a number of selection categories (see below). The school will only proceed to the next selection category where places remain available.

Category	Criteria and Order of Selection
1	Siblings of students currently enrolled in and attending Scoil Dara
2	Students from feeder primary schools (see table below) whose parent's principal, private residence is in the Scoil Dara catchment area
3	Students whose parent's principal, private residence is in the Scoil Dara catchment area
4	All other applicants

Feeder Primary schools	
Scoil Choca Naofa (Kilcock)	St. Josephs National School (Kilcock)
Scoil Ui Riada	Tiermohan National School
Newtown National School	Enfield National School
Coole National School	Moynalvey National School
Mulhussey National school	

In a situation where the number of students in the next qualifying selection category, exceeds the number of places remaining, then the students in that category will be placed into a lottery.

Late applications will only be considered where places remain available. Unsuccessful applicants may request to be put on the waiting list. A '*waiting list request form*' is posted out to all unsuccessful applicants. In the event that a place becomes available before the end of September, then another lottery draw will take place from the students who have opted to go on the waiting list (as described above; **in order of selection category defined in Table A** on page 10). The application forms of all unsuccessful applicants will be shredded after the end of the second term (December). The enrolment process for first year is then deemed to be complete.

Procedure for Admission from another School (Transfer Applications)

This section of the policy applies to students who are or who have been enrolled in another school and wish to make an application to enrol in Scoil Dara. As a matter of general policy, transfers into Scoil Dara from another school are discouraged (especially into exam years) in the overall interests of the continuity of the student's education and to minimise disruption to classes. **In general, it is the policy of Board of Management of Scoil Dara not to accept transfers during the school year.**

However, the Board of Management will consider an application where:

1. The student has already moved into the catchment area, and,
 2. The existence of exceptional circumstances.
- An offer of transfer enrolment from the Board of Management is subject to all of the following:
 - The availability of places in the year group and specific subjects
 - Conformity with all of the selection criteria per the admission into first year
 - Proof/evidence of residence in the catchment area
 - The ability of the school to ensure continuity of study of subjects and levels
 - The acceptance and full compliance with the Code of Behaviour by the student and the parent/guardians
 - The acceptance and full compliance with the Uniform Code by the student and the parent/guardians
 - The exhaustion of all disciplinary proceedings, including any Section 29 appeals with the school where they are currently or have been enrolled
 - The submission of a fully completed transfer application form, including all requested and supporting documentation. Forms will not be processed until they are complete.

Initially, the Principal processes the fully completed transfer applications and associated/requested documentation (see transfer enrolment application form). The Principal then determines whether the applicant meets the criteria (see above) for consideration by the Board of Management, for example; residence in catchment area, availability of a place in relevant classes etc. If the transfer enrolment criteria are not met, then the Principal will inform the parents/guardians that the application has been unsuccessful.

Where a student meets all the above criteria and is being considered for a place, then the Principal will arrange a meeting with the student and their parents/guardians. This meeting provides an opportunity for students and their parents/guardians to find out more about Scoil Dara and its values, expectations and ethos. The parents/guardians and the student will be provided with a *Student Enquiry Form* which they must sign and bring to the students current/previous school for completion by the Principal there. The Principal of Scoil Dara

will also contact the former school(s) of the applicant. The parents/guardians will be informed of the date for the next Board of Management meeting. The Principal will present such considered transfers applications to the Board of Management. The Board of Management will consider the application. It is necessary that the applicant's behaviour record is deemed to be beneficial to the good order, discipline and educational welfare of the existing students of Scoil Dara. In addition, the Board of Management must be of the opinion that the admission is considered beneficial to the student and their continuing education. The Board of Management will decide whether to (i) refuse enrolment, (ii) offer to admit the student immediately, or (iii) defer an offer of enrolment if the Board is of the view that it would more appropriate to wait until the beginning of the next term/year. This is to minimise disruption to the existing students of Scoil Dara and to facilitate the student's smooth transition into Scoil Dara. Parents/guardians will be notified within 7 days to the Board's decision.

The Board of Management reserves the right to refuse enrolment (see section on *Right to Refuse Enrolment*).

Important Notes for Applicants:

- Transfer Application forms are available from the office of Scoil Dara. Specific information and supporting documentation as requested on the form must accompany the Transfer Application form and the Student Enquiry Form (as per Section 20 of the Education Welfare Act (2000)) in order to be deemed complete. Only fully completed applications will be processed. Where an applicant has attended more than one post-primary school, they must submit all requested documentation from each post-primary school. Transfer applications will be processed within 21 days, excluding school holiday periods when the school is closed. Transfer applications posted to the school during school holidays will be processed within 21 days of the school reopening.
- Where a student, who has left Scoil Dara voluntarily to take up employment or to attend another educational establishment, subsequently makes a formal application for re-admission to Scoil Dara, the Board of Management shall, upon review, decide as to whether or not to readmit the student to the school. Such a review would incorporate the student's previous record in the school in relation to learning, participation in school activities, attendance, behaviour, allegations of bullying behaviour...etc. Such an application will be processed in the same manner as a transfer enrolment application.
- Applications will not be accepted from students who are the subject of ongoing disciplinary proceedings in another school, which include any ongoing statutory appeals procedures in accordance with The Education Act 1998 or The Education (Welfare) Act 2000.
- Scoil Dara reserves the right to request a confidential reference from the authorities in previous schools.

Procedure for Admission into a Curricular Programme or Subject

Entry to specific programmes for Senior Cycle will be determined following a review of all applications from existing students. An interview process *may* apply to ascertain the suitability of the student applying for the specific programme. In all instances, students and parents/guardians will be informed of the selection criteria prior to interview.

Entry to specific subjects will be determined by reference to the subject choice preference forms completed by students at the end of October in First Year (for Junior Cycle) and at the end of third year/transition year (for students progressing to Leaving Certificate). For senior cycle subjects (and levels), the student's previous performance (in that subject) may be considered relative to the other students applying for the subject/level. It should be noted that while every effort will be made to accommodate individual subject preferences, it is not always possible due to over/under demand or scheduling issues e.g. two subjects on at the one time on the timetable. Late submission of subject preference forms will not be afforded priority in assigning optional subjects.

Application to Repeat a Year.

All applications to repeat a year are governed by the guidelines set down in the DES Circular Letter M02/95. All applications will be considered in light of places available in the relevant group, overall school numbers, subject availability and the admissions criteria set out in this policy. Scoil Dara does not offer a repeat year for students who have completed senior cycle, but a consideration may be made in cases of exceptional circumstances. The Principal must be satisfied that the repeat of the year is in the interest of the relevant student and other students.

Application Process:

- Applications must be in writing from the parents and must state the relevant Circular and section(s) being invoked in support of the application and must be accompanied by supporting documentation, as appropriate.
- The school must be satisfied that the applicant, considering the special circumstances that gave rise to the application, applied themselves to the best of their ability whilst in school. The Principal may consult with the Deputy Principals, students' Year Head and teachers in considering if the student met this requirement.
- The request to repeat a year will only be accommodated in the event that a place is available in the year group in which the student wishes to study.
- The application to repeat the year will only be successful subject to all first-time applicants having been accommodated.
- The student will have to reapply for subject options which may differ to what they currently are studying.

Applications from students already enrolled and attending Scoil Dara will be the first applications considered in any year.

Right to Refuse Enrolment

The Board of Management reserves the right to refuse and post-pone an application for admission into Scoil Dara. An application for enrolment in Scoil Dara will be refused in any of the following situations:

- It is considered that the enrolment would be seriously detrimental to the continuity of the education of the applicant
- It is considered that the enrolment of the applicant would make impossible, or have a serious detrimental effect on, the provision by an educational establishment of its services to others
- It is considered that the enrolment would be likely to cause significant detriment to the order, discipline, learning environment and positive atmosphere in the school
- It is considered that the enrolment of the applicant would likely be significantly detrimental to the wellbeing of the other students attending the school
- It is considered that the enrolment of the applicant would likely pose a significant Health and Safety risk to the members of the school community
- It is considered that the enrolment of the applicant would cause a significant risk to other students, school staff or school property
- The applicant still has a place in another post-primary school
- The applicant has an established prior record of poor behaviour
- The applicant has insufficient educational attainment to participate in a particular course
- The applicant has been excluded from another school for causing serious disruption to the learning environment, drugs related offences, sexual assault, or violence. The list of reasons stated here are not exhaustive and all factors will be considered
- If a student has been excluded from Scoil Dara, an application to re-enrol will not be permitted.

Right of Appeal

In the event that a student is refused admission/enrolment into Scoil Dara, parents/guardians (or a student who has reached 18 year of age) have the right to appeal the decision under Section 29 of the Education Act (1998). In the first instance, the appeal is made to the Board of Management of Scoil Dara. If the appeal to the Board is unsuccessful, then an appeal can then be made to the Minister for Education and Skills.