

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 on [date]. 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. Thomas Senior 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. Thomas Senior National School is a Catholic school with a Catholic ethos under the patronage of the Bishop of Dublin. 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

- (a) The full and harmonious development of all aspects of the person of the pupil, including the intellectual, physical, cultural, moral and spiritual aspects; and
- (b) A living relationship with God and with other people, and
- (c) A philosophy of life inspired by belief in God and in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus and
- (d) The formation of the pupils in the Catholic faith;

and which school provides religious education of 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 Thomas Senior National School shall uphold and be accountable to the patron for so upholding the characteristic spirit, linguistic and spiritual values and traditions which inform and are 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.

Mission Statement

St. Thomas Senior National School is a Catholic school under the patronage of the Archbishop of Dublin. While it is a school with a Catholic ethos it has due recognition for pupils of all other faiths or of no faith. Our school motto “Every Child is Valued” is inherent in everything we do. We are committed to creating a caring, supportive and respectful atmosphere at school where every pupil achieves their full potential. Our primary aim is to promote the academic, moral, physical, social and emotional development of our pupils appropriate to their age and abilities in a caring, safe and nurturing environment.

The Board of Management, principal, teaching staff, ancillary staffs, pupils and parents/guardians work together to create a positive and caring ethos throughout this school. This positive school ethos is based on mutual respect, on the quality of relationships - the professional and respectful relationships between the staff as a whole and interactions between staff and pupils, parents/guardians. This caring ethos permeates all teaching and learning situations as well as all interactions in our school and it contributes to the formation of strong and healthy relationships throughout the whole school community.

We are committed to developing our ethos of care, concern support and respect throughout the school and we place an emphasis on the pastoral care of our pupils. We have an open door policy and welcome and encourage parents to our school where they can become involved in the home school community. We work together in partnership with them to ensure their children have the best educational experiences

3. Admission Statement

St. Thomas Senior 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.

Primary schools receiving applications from applicants of a minority religion

St. Thomas Senior National School is a school whose objective is to provide education in an environment which promotes certain religious values and does not discriminate in relation to the admission of a student who has applied for a place in the school in accordance with section 7A of the Equal Status Act 2000.

All denominational schools

St. Thomas Senior National School is a 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 (insert details of particular religious denomination concerned) and it is proved that the refusal is essential to maintain the ethos of the school.

Schools with special education class(es)

St. Thomas Senior National School is a school which has established a class, with the approval of the Minister for Education and Skills, which provides an education exclusively for students with a category or categories 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.

Children with identified Special Educational Needs

Children with SEN enrolling in the school will be resourced in accordance with the level of resources provided by the DES / NCSE to the Board of Management. The Board of Management will request a copy of any available relevant reports from relevant professionals including the child's medical and/or psychological report or where such a report is not available will request that the child be assessed immediately by the relevant body. The purpose of the assessment report is to assist the school in establishing the educational and or special care needs of the child relevant to his/her disability or special needs and to profile the support services required. The Board of Management will endeavour to have all resources and supports in place before the child is admitted to the school. This may include visiting teacher service, SNA support, resource teacher support, specialised equipment or furniture, transport services etc. A child with defined SEN who is enrolled shall be prioritised in the school regarding allocation of resources.

The school will meet with the Parent / Guardians of the child and if appropriate, with the SENO to discuss the child's needs and the school's suitability or capability in meeting those needs.

Notwithstanding the availability of such resources, parents of children who are dissatisfied with level of educational provision in St. Thomas Senior School are advised to consider a special school which is designated and resources to specifically cater for the needs of children with SEN.

Prior to enrolment the school will acquaint itself to the best of its ability with a child's SEN in a number of ways which can include:

- A meeting will be held between parents of children with SEN and the principal
- As is deemed appropriate, contact will be made with the Special Educational Needs Organiser (SENO), National Educational Psychological Services (NEPS) psychologist and /or other appropriate agencies in order to access resources necessary to facilitate the inclusion of the child with SEN in this school.
- In order to facilitate a smooth transition to the school for pupils with SEN a number of steps will be taken as necessary. These may include visits to the school by parents and pupils, contact with previous school as necessary, implementing a buddy system and contact with special school or related services.
- If a child has a Special Needs Assistant (SNA) in the junior school, contact will be made with that person and if deemed appropriate, a meeting will be held with the SNA appointed in the senior school and the SNA from the junior school
- Information may be provided at a meeting in September when the third class teacher has an opportunity to meet with the teacher of the previous year
- Health and safety issues arising from a child's mobility and/or care needs will be identified and strategies developed to address them on an individual basis and as necessary
- For pupils with SEN who are new to the school and who did not attend the junior school, parents will meet the Principal / HSCL as necessary. The previous school will be contacted and copies of reports requested.

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

St. Thomas Senior National School with the approval of the Minister for Education and Skills, has established classes to provide an education exclusively for students with Specific Learning Disability and for students with Mild General Learning Difficulties

Special Class for children with MGLD:

The school has two classes for children identified by an educational psychologist as having general learning difficulties. Priority will be given to children currently enrolled in mainstream classes in the school with a professional report recommending placement in special class, Pupils with a Borderline MGLD may also be recommended for placement in the special class if there are additional areas of concern such as poor language development, immature social behaviour or mild emotional disturbance.

Special Class for children with SLD:

The school also has a class for children identified by an educational psychologist as having specific learning disabilities. Priority will be given to children currently enrolled in mainstream classes in the school with a professional report recommending placement.

The children attend on a full time temporary basis for a maximum of two years. In exceptional circumstances children may following a review by an educational psychologist be recommended for a 3rd year. Children must be 8 years of age, have been assessed by psychologist as having a specific learning disability/dyslexia and be recommended for the Reading Unit.

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

All denominational schools

St. Thomas Senior National School is a Catholic school and may refuse to admit as a student a person who is not of Catholic denomination where it is proved that the refusal is essential to maintain the ethos of the school.

School with special education class(es)

The special classes attached to St. Thomas Senior National School provides an education exclusively for students with Specific Learning Disability and Mild General Learning Difficulties 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.

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:

1. Children transferring from St. Thomas Junior National School
2. Sisters / brothers of pupils in the school, sisters / brothers of past pupils of the school and Catholic children living within the parish.
3. Children living within the parish who do not fall into category 1 or 2
4. Children living outside the parish, but whose home address is closest to the school who do not fall into category 1 or 2

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 waiting list will be established and the application which was received first will offered a place

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) a student's prior attendance up to 2nd 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 admission to a special class insofar as it is necessary in order to ascertain whether or not the student has the category of special educational needs concerned
- (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; (other than, in the case of the school wishing to include a selection criteria based on (1) siblings of a student attending or having attended the school and/or (2) parents or grandparents of a student having attended the school. In relation to (2) parents and grandparents having attended, a school may only apply this criteria to a maximum of 25% of the available spaces as set out in the school's annual admission notice).
- (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.

This is also subject to the school making offers based on existing waiting lists (up until 31st January 2025 only).

8. Decisions on applications

All decisions on applications for admission to St. Thomas Senior National School will be based on the following:

- Our school's admission policy
- The school's annual admission notice (where applicable)
- 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.

While recognising the right of parents to make application to the school of their choice, the Board of Management of St. Thomas Senior National School has the responsibility to respect the rights of the existing school community and in particular the children already enrolled in the school. This requires balanced judgements, which are guided by the principles of natural justice and acting in the best

interests of all the children. The completion of an application form does not confer an automatic right to a place in the school.

The school may refuse admission in exceptional circumstances for example, if the child has special needs such that, even with additional resources available from the DES, the school cannot meet such needs and/or provide the child with an appropriate education or if the student poses unacceptable risk to other students/staff/property. (*See Appendix: Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act, (2004)*)

If enrolment to St. Thomas Senior School is refused, parents have the right to appeal the decision under Section 29 of the Education Act (1998). Parents will be informed of the right to appeal by the principal on behalf of the Board of Management verbally and/or in writing.

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 18](#) below for further details).

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

In accepting an offer of admission from St. Thomas Senior 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 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. Thomas Senior 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 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. Thomas Senior 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. Thomas Senior 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 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:

Parents/guardians wishing to enrol their children to classes other than the intake group are required to fill out an application form which is available from Secretary's office. Pupils may transfer to St. Thomas Senior National School at any time during the school year subject to school policy, availability of space, pupil teacher ratio and in some cases the approval of the National Council for Special Education and /or Department of Education and Skills.

The parent / guardian will be asked to supply reports and relevant information from the child's previous school and/or may be asked to sign a *Consent Form* giving this school permission to seek information including if relevant, professional reports from the child's previous school. It is a requirement of the Education Welfare Act Section 20 (5) (a) (b) that information concerning the child's educational progress and school attendance be communicated between schools.

In order to provide the most appropriate level of support, if required, it is school policy that diagnostic reading tests are administered to all pupils new to the school.

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:

Parents/guardians wishing to enrol their children after the commencement of the school year in which admission is sought are required to fill in application form available from Secretary's office. Pupils may transfer to St. Thomas Senior National School at any time during the school year subject to school policy, availability of space, pupil teacher ratio and in some cases the approval of the National Council for Special Education and /or Department of Education and Skills.

The parent / guardian will be asked to supply reports and relevant information from the child's previous school and/or may be asked to sign a *Consent Form* giving this school permission to seek information including if relevant, professional reports from the child's previous school. It is a

requirement of the Education Welfare Act Section 20 (5) (a) (b) that information concerning the child's educational progress and school attendance be communicated between schools.

In order to provide the most appropriate level of support, if required, it is school policy that diagnostic reading tests with parental consent are administered to all pupils new to the school.

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

The board of St. Thomas Senior 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.

17. Arrangements regarding students not attending religious instruction

The following are the school's arrangements for students, where the parents or in the case of a student who has reached the age of 18 years, the student, who has 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 Principal of the school. A meeting will then be arranged with the parent(s) or the student, as the case may be, to discuss how the request may be accommodated by the school.

18. 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.

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.

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.

Appendix: Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act, (2004)

2. – A child with special educational needs shall be educated in an inclusive environment with children who do not have such needs unless the nature and degree of those needs of the child is such that to do so would be inconsistent with

(a) the best interests of the child as determined in accordance with any assessment carried out under this Act, or

(b) the effective provision of education for children with whom the child is to be educated

