

# St. Oliver's Special School



## Admissions Policy

### Admission Policy of St. Oliver's Special School

**School Address: The Glebe, Tuam, Co. Galway**

**Roll number: 20330J**

**School Patron: Ability West**

#### 1. Introduction

This Admission Policy complies with the requirements of the Education Acts 1998 to 2018, the Education (Admission to Schools) Act 2018 and the Equal Status Acts 2000 to 2018. In drafting this policy, the Board of Management of St. Oliver's Special School (the "**Board of Management**") has consulted with School staff, the School patron, NCSE and with parents of children attending St. Oliver's Special School (the "**School.**")

The policy was approved by the School patron on 8th June 2020. It is published on the School's website and will be made available in hardcopy, on request, to any person who requests it. This policy is reviewed regularly.

The relevant dates and timelines for St. Oliver's Special School admission process are set out in the School's annual admission notice which is published annually on the School's website at least one week before the commencement of the admission process for the school year concerned.

This policy must be read in conjunction with the annual admission notice for the school year concerned.

The application form for admission is published on the School's website and will be made available in hardcopy on request to any person who requests it.

## 2. Characteristic spirit and general objectives of the School

St. Oliver's Special School is a Special School in Tuam, Co. Galway, which operates for the purpose of providing for the needs of children with educational difficulties referred to below.

Education is provided for pupils aged 4 to 18 whose primary assessed disability is a severe to profound general learning disability. The School also caters for children with moderate multiple diagnosis, moderate general learning disability and an additional diagnosis e.g. Autism or Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties.

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

St. Oliver's Special School operates under the patronage of Ability West. Ability West employs a nurse to be on-site full-time school hours, 5 days a week to assist with the children's medical needs. Multi-disciplinary support is provided by the students' local CDNT. This multidisciplinary team of professionals can assist each student to access the curriculum and provide support and guidance with all other aspects of their development.

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

In accordance with S.15 (2) (b) of the Education Act, 1998 the Board of Management of St. Oliver's Special School shall uphold, and be accountable to the patron for upholding, the characteristic spirit of the School as determined by the cultural, educational, moral, religious, social, linguistic and spiritual values and traditions which inform and are characteristic of the objectives and conduct of the School.

### *St. Oliver's Special School Mission Statement and general objectives of the School:*

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

St. Oliver's Special School will at all times comply with its statutory obligations including its obligations under the Education Acts 1998 to 2018, the Education (Admission to Schools) Act 2018 and the Equal Status Acts 2000 to 2018

## 3. Admission Statement

St. Oliver's Special School will not discriminate in its admission of a student to the School on any of the following grounds:

- (a) the gender ground of the student or the applicant in respect of the student concerned,
- (b) the civil status ground of the student or the applicant in respect of the student concerned,
- (c) the family status ground of the student or the applicant in respect of the student concerned,
- (d) the sexual orientation ground of the student or the applicant in respect of the student concerned,
- (e) the religion ground of the student or the applicant in respect of the student concerned,
- (f) the disability ground of the student or the applicant in respect of the student concerned,
- (g) the ground of race of the student or the applicant in respect of the student concerned,
- (h) the Traveller community ground of the student or the applicant in respect of the student concerned, or
- (i) the ground that the student or the applicant in respect of the student concerned has special educational needs

As per section 61 (3) of the Education Act 1998, 'civil status ground', 'disability ground', 'discriminate', 'family status ground', 'gender ground', 'ground of race', 'religion ground', 'sexual orientation ground' and 'Traveller community ground' shall be construed in accordance with section 3 of the Equal Status Act 2000.

#### **Special School**

St. Oliver's Special School is a school which, with the approval of the Minister for Education and Skills, provides an education exclusively for students with a category or categories of special educational needs specified by the Minister and does not discriminate in relation to the admission of a student who does not have the category of needs specified.

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

##### **Special School**

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

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

## 5. Admission of Students and Admissions Process

### **Special School**

St. Oliver's Special School provides an education exclusively for students with severe and profound or moderate multiple intellectual disability and may refuse admission to a student, where the student does not have the specified category of special educational needs provided for by the School.

This school shall admit each student seeking admission where that student has the specific category of special educational needs provided for by the School 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, or
- c) the NCSE Parent Notify form has not been provided stating eligibility to enrol in a special school

### 5.1 Overview of the Enrolment process

#### 5.1.1 Initial School Visit

Before making any application, parents are invited to visit the School so that they will be better able to decide on the suitability of the School for their child. Parent(s)/Guardian(s) may write or phone for an appointment to visit. The parent(s)/guardian(s) will have the opportunity to speak with the Principal/Deputy Principal. Other professionals e.g. social workers, psychologists and other key personnel are also welcome to visit, by appointment. At these visits the parent(s)/guardian(s) or professional(s) will be given an opportunity to see the resources and facilities at the School.

#### 5.1.2 Referral

St. Oliver's Special School welcomes referrals from parents/guardians or other relevant professionals working with the child. As the Irish Constitution recognises parents as the primary educators of their child, applications will only be accepted from parents, legal guardians or someone acting on foot of a court order or statutory power in a parental role.

#### 5.1.3 Overview of Application and Enrolment Process

Parents are asked to contact the School to obtain an application form or download one from the School's website. This form must be completed in full and all requested documentation must be included to be considered for admission. This application form must be returned

before the Closing Date for Applications for that particular year of entry. The Closing Date is set out in the Annual Admissions Notice published on the School website.

Please note applications are accepted each year ONLY between 1st October and the Closing Date for the following September. Applications received before that period WILL NOT BE CONSIDERED and will be returned to the sender. Applications which are returned to a parent due to the application being received out of time can be appealed in accordance with the procedure set out at Section 18 below.

## 5.2 Steps in the Application and Enrolment Process

The following procedure will apply to all applications for placement in the school:

- a) Parents send letter or make a telephone request for admission to the School;
- b) Parents are sent a copy of the Admissions Policy and an application form;
- c) Parents are asked to return the following:
  - i. Completed application form,
  - ii. Full birth certificate,
  - iii. Proof of address e.g. utility bill,
  - iv. Psychological assessment report (dated from within the last 24 months),
  - v. NCSE Parent Notify letter stating eligibility to enrol in a special school (see information note from NCSE attached to this policy),
  - vi. Up to date reports from the child's present school (from within the last 12 months) with the details of the learning and social development of the child and any behaviour issues of relevance, and
  - vii. Any other professional reports available such as:
    - o Psychiatric Assessment,
    - o Speech & Language Assessment,
    - o Occupational Therapy Report,
    - o Social Work Report,
- d) Following receipt of the completed application form, the Admissions Committee will arrange a meeting to determine the allocation of places, as per the criteria as set out in section 5.5 below. If the documents listed at 5.3 (c) (i)-(vii) are not included with the application, the application will be deemed incomplete, will be returned to the child's parents and will not be considered.
- e) The Admissions Committee, having considered each application, submits the list of names to the Board of Management prior to offering places for their consideration and decision. If the Board of Management decides to admit a child, a letter of offer will be sent to parents along with the School's Code of Behaviour. This letter of offer will be issued within 21 days of the closing date for applications. The offer will be subject to parents providing written agreement for their child to adhere to the School's Code of Behaviour and the other policies listed on the application form. If the Board of Management decides not to enrol a child the parents of the child will

also be informed within 21 days of the closing date for applications. If the Board of Management has accepted the child for enrolment, they will then inform the Department of Education of the decision and seek its approval for the placement and its sanction for school transport arrangement.

- f) Parents will be requested to respond to the offer of a place by a specified date (failure to respond by that date will result in the offer lapsing) and complete a number of additional forms for the NCSE including an application to the NCSE for school transport and SNA support, if applicable. Parents will also be required to complete school specific documents such as communication passports, an 'All About Me' document and medical information forms.
- g) If a child meets the Threshold Criteria below but either the number of applicants has exceeded the vacancies available or enrolment is refused on any other basis, parents/guardians of other applicants will be informed that there is currently no place available but will be asked if they wish for their child's details to be retained by the School on a waiting list in case of future vacancies. In such a case, parents/guardians will be advised that the School is formally declining a place to their child in the School and will advise the parents of the appeals procedure set out below.
- h) If the child does not meet the Threshold Criteria below, the parents/guardians will be advised that the School is formally declining a place to their child in the School and will advise the parents of the appeals procedure set out below.

### **5.3 Consideration of applications**

Applications for admission to St. Oliver's Special School will only be considered where a child meets each of the following criteria:

#### **5.3.1 Threshold Criteria for Consideration of Application:**

1. The child is in the severe to profound or moderate multiple cognitive range (as confirmed by an appropriate professional's report included in the child's application) and therefore has the ability to benefit from the education and skills programmes offered in the School;
2. The application form was fully completed and included all enclosures appropriate to the application.
3. The application was received by the closing date for applications for that particular year of entry.
4. The child is at least 4 years old and has not reached their 18th birthday on the 1st of September of the year of entry;
5. The psychological report is dated within 24 months of the application.

### **5.3.2 Criteria for Assessment of Applications which meet the Threshold Criteria**

If the Admissions Committee considers that a pupil satisfies the Threshold Criteria set out above, it will assess the application on the basis of the following criteria. Each application which meets the Threshold Criteria will be assessed on the basis of the following points. Applications will also be assessed on the following criteria on the basis of the documents provided during the Application procedure:

1. The child will be able to tolerate a classroom environment containing other children;
2. The composition, special needs and ages of the pupils currently enrolled in the class into which the child would be admitted;
3. The availability of expertise within the School to deal with any other needs the child may have such as Autism Spectrum Disorder, Down Syndrome, Fragile X, ADD/ADHD, speech and language disorders, physical and sensory disabilities, and medical conditions.
4. The extent to which the child's primary diagnosis and capacity to benefit from the educational opportunities available in the School may be affected by any other needs the child may have such as Autism Spectrum Disorder, Down Syndrome, Fragile X, ADD/ADHD, speech and language disorders, physical and sensory disabilities, and medical conditions.
5. The pupil/teacher ratio will be appropriate to the needs of the child;
6. The Admissions Committee are satisfied that the overall needs of the child can be met in the School;
7. There is sufficient physical space in the relevant classroom and the appropriate class for that child has not reached full capacity.

### **5.3.3 Requirement to furnish all reports relating to the child within three years of application**

Please note that all reports relating to a child which have been created by a psychologist, psychiatrist, behavioural therapist, paediatrician or other relevant medical practitioner (who has produced a report relating to the child's cognitive development, learning ability or educational development) within the three years preceding application must be provided to the School for assessment by the Admissions Committee. The withholding of reports from the Admissions Committee may invalidate an Enrolment Application at any time. If, after enrolment, it later becomes apparent that reports or relevant information has been withheld from the School, this may result in an application being invalidated or, if it becomes apparent after enrolment, in the child involved losing their place in the School.

### **5.3.4 Exceptional Circumstances warranting refusal of an enrolment**

Even where the Threshold Criteria are met and where the child would otherwise be eligible for admission, the School reserves the right to refuse enrolment to a pupil in exceptional cases. Such an exceptional case could arise where the pupil has previously been expelled from St. Oliver's Special School in circumstances where the Board of Management feels that placement in St. Oliver's Special School would not be appropriate for the child.

## 6. Oversubscription

In the event that the School is oversubscribed, the School will, when deciding on applications for admission, apply the following selection criteria in the order listed below to those applications that are received within the timeline for receipt of applications as set out in the school's annual admission notice:

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

- i. The extent to which the prospective student will benefit from early intervention – the youngest child is ranked highest for each destination class,
- ii. The location/address, of the prospective students Eircode. This is to determine if St. Oliver's Special School is the closest special school to the student; students whose nearest special school is St. Oliver's Special School will be ranked the highest,
- iii. Whether there is sufficient physical space in the relevant classrooms in which that child can be accommodated and any appropriate class in which that child can be accommodated has not reached full capacity.

It may occasionally occur that a child requires such additional physical space, resources or staffing support that that child effectively requires the equivalent of two or more places in that class (as determined by the child's designated pupil/teacher ratio). This may correspondingly reduce the number of other places available or may mean that even where the Board of Management has identified a class grouping as having two available places, that class would now be full in light of that child's needs. Such a circumstance is within the discretion of the Board of Management to limit class size where required for safety or educational reasons.

If there is no place available for the child in the assigned class then the application will be refused. If there is a place available in a particular class and there are a number of applicants for the same place, then the Board of Management will rank each such application in accordance with their marks from the Oversubscription Criteria above and applicants will be offered any available places based on their ranking on these criteria.

In the event of two or more children who are candidates for the same place having the same marks, the Board of Management will first review the marking again for each such child. If the respective marks remain the same after this review, the children's names will be picked at random by an independent person (who is not on the Board of Management or connected with any person applying for a place in the School) and the first such name picked will be offered the place. Unsuccessful applicants whose applications are ranked with the same marks will be placed on the Current Year Waiting List for the destination class in the order that they are picked at random by the independent person referred to above.

## 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 at a preschool or pre-school service, including naíonraí
- (b) the payment of fees or contributions (howsoever described) to the School;
- (c) a student's academic ability, skills or aptitude; other than in relation to meeting the criteria for the specific disability designation of the School
- (d) the occupation, financial status, academic ability, skills or aptitude of a student's parents
- (e) a requirement that a student, or his or her parents, attend an interview, open day or other meeting as a condition of admission;
- (f) a student's connection to the School by virtue of a member of his or her family attending or having previously attended the School;
- (g) the date and time on which an application for admission was received by the School,

This is subject to the application being received at any time during the period specified for receiving applications set out in the annual admission notice of the School for the school year concerned.

## 8. Decisions on applications

All decisions on applications for admission to St. Oliver's Special School will be based on the following:

- The 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 the School's admission policy will not be used to make a decision on an application for a place in the 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 the School, the reasons why they were not offered a place will be communicated in writing to the applicant, including, where applicable, details of the student's ranking against the selection criteria and details of the student's place on the waiting list for the school year concerned.

Applicants will be informed of the right to seek a review/right of appeal of the School's decision.

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

In accepting an offer of admission from St. Oliver's Special School, you must indicate—

(j) whether or not you have accepted an offer of admission for another school or schools. If you have accepted such an offer, you must also provide details of the offer or offers concerned, and

(ii) whether or not you have applied for and awaiting confirmation of an offer of admission from another school or schools, and if so, you must provide details of the other school or schools concerned.

## **11. Circumstances in which offers may not be made or may be withdrawn**

An offer of admission may not be made or may be withdrawn by St. Oliver's Special School where—

- (i) it is established that information contained in the application is false or misleading.
- (ii) an applicant fails to confirm acceptance of an offer of admission on or before the date set out in the annual admission notice of the School.
- (iii) the parent of a student, when required by the principal in accordance with section 23(4) of the Education (Welfare) Act 2000, fails to confirm in writing that the code of behaviour of the School is acceptable to him or her and that he or she shall make all reasonable efforts to ensure compliance with such code by the student; or
- (iv) an applicant has failed to comply with the requirements of 'acceptance of an offer' as set out in section 10 above.

## **12. Sharing of Data with other schools**

Applicants should be aware that section 66(6) of the Education (Admission to Schools) Act 2018 allows for the sharing of certain information between schools in order to facilitate the efficient admission of students.

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

Section 66(6) allows a school to provide a patron or another board of management with a list of the students in relation to whom—

- (i) an application for admission to the school has been received,
- (ii) an offer of admission to the school has been made, or
- (iii) an offer of admission to the school has been accepted.

The list may include any or all of the following:

- (i) the date on which an application for admission was received by the school;
- (ii) the date on which an offer of admission was made by the school;
- (iii) the date on which an offer of admission was accepted by an applicant;
- (iv) a student's personal details including his or her name, address, date of birth and personal public service number (within the meaning of section 262 of the Social Welfare Consolidation Act 2005).

### **13. Waiting list in the event of oversubscription**

In the event of there being more applications to the school year concerned than places available, a waiting list of students whose applications for admission to St. Oliver's Special School were unsuccessful due to the School being oversubscribed will be compiled and will remain valid for the school year in which admission is being sought.

Placement on the waiting list of St. Oliver's Special School is in the order of priority assigned to the students' applications after the School has applied the selection criteria in accordance with this admission policy.

Offers of any subsequent places that become available for and during the school year in relation to which admission is being sought will be made to those students on the waiting list, in accordance with the order of priority in relation to which the students have been placed on the list.

### **14. Late Applications**

All applications for admission received after the closing date as outlined in the annual admission notice will be considered and decided upon in accordance with the School's admissions policy, the Education Admissions to School Act 2018 and any regulations made under that Act.

Late applications will be notified of the decision in respect of their application no later than three weeks after the date on which the School received the application. Late applications will be offered a place if there is a place available. In the event that there is no place available, the name of the applicant will be added to the end of the waiting list and offered a place where one becomes available as set out in Section 13.

## 15. Procedures for admission of students to other years and during the school year

The procedures of the School in relation to the admission of students who are not already admitted to the School to classes or years other than the School's intake group are as follows:

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

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

The procedures of the School in relation to the admission of students who are not already admitted to the School, after the commencement of the school year in which admission is sought, are as follows:

Admissions to St. Oliver's Special School during the school year is only accepted in emergency situations whereby a student is relocated to the area and there is no waiting list. Admissions during academic year can only be considered if the closing date for admission for the following academic year has not passed and the vacant place has not been offered to another student following an admissions meeting for the following academic year.

The following selection process is as follows:

1. The child will be able to tolerate a classroom environment containing other children;
2. The composition, special needs and ages of the pupils currently enrolled in the class into which the child would be admitted;
3. The availability of expertise within the School to deal with any other needs the child may have such as Autism Spectrum Disorder, Down Syndrome, Fragile X, ADD/ADHD, Speech and Language disorders, physical and sensory disabilities, and medical conditions.
4. The extent to which the child's primary diagnosis and capacity to benefit from the educational opportunities available in the School may be affected by any other needs the child may have such as Autism Spectrum Disorder, Down Syndrome, Fragile X, ADD/ADHD, Speech and Language disorders, physical and sensory disabilities, and medical conditions.
5. The pupil/teacher ratio will be appropriate to the needs of the child;
6. The Admissions Committee are satisfied that the overall needs of the child can be met in the School;

|                                                                                                                                         |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 7. There is sufficient physical space in the relevant classroom and the appropriate class for that child has not reached full capacity. |
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## 16. Declaration in relation to the non-charging of fees

The Board of Management of St. Oliver's Special School or any persons acting on its behalf will not charge fees for or seek payment or contributions as a condition of-

- (a) an application for admission of a student to the School, or
- (b) the admission or continued enrolment of a student in the School.

## 17. Reviews/appeals

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

The parent of the student, or in the case of a student who has reached the age of 18 years, the student, may request the Board of Management 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 of Management will conduct such reviews in accordance with the requirements of the procedures determined under Section 29B and with section 29C of the Education Act 1998.

**Note:** Where an applicant has been refused admission due to the School being oversubscribed, the applicant **must request a review** of that decision by the Board of Management prior to making an appeal under section 29 of the Education Act 1998. This review must be requested within three weeks of the parent receiving notification of a school placement for their child being declined.

Where an applicant has been refused admission due to a reason other than the School being oversubscribed, the applicant **may request a review** of that decision by the Board of Management prior to making an appeal under section 29 of the Education Act 1998. This review must be requested within three weeks of the parent receiving notification of a school placement for their child being declined.

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

### **Right of appeal**

Under Section 29 of the Education Act 1998, the parent of the student, or in the case of a student who has reached the age of 18 years, the student, may appeal a decision of the School to refuse admission.

An appeal may be made under Section 29 (1)(c)(i) of the Education Act 1998 where the refusal to admit was due to the School being oversubscribed.

An appeal may be made under Section 29 (1)(c)(ii) of the Education Act 1998 where the refusal to admit was due a reason other than the School being oversubscribed.

Where an applicant has been refused admission due to the School being oversubscribed, the applicant **must request a review** of that decision by the Board of Management **prior to making an appeal** under section 29 of the Education Act 1998. (see Review of decisions by the Board of Management)

Where an applicant has been refused admission due to a reason other than the School being oversubscribed, the applicant **may request a review** of that decision by the Board of Management prior to making an appeal under section 29 of the Education Act 1998. (see Review of decisions by the Board of Management)

Appeals under Section 29 of the Education Act 1998 will be considered and determined by an independent appeals committee appointed by the Minister for Education and Skills.

The timeline within which such an appeal must be made and the other requirements applicable to such appeals are set out in the procedures determined by the Minister under section 29B of the Education Act 1998 which are published on the website of the Department of Education and Skills.

**Ratification and Communication:**

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management on 20th May 2020 and reviewed on the 7th June 2023 and 11th June 2025 and was subjected to a compliance review and ratified by the board on the 29<sup>th</sup> April 2026. The policy will be made available to all school staff and to parents/guardians of children wishing to enrol their son/daughter in St. Oliver's Special School.

Signed: Joseph Rayth  
Chairperson Board of Management

Signed: Bernie Creaven  
Principal

Date: 29/04/2026

Date: 29/4/26

Date of next review: 29/4/2027