

St Columba's College

Admissions Policy

As ratified by the Board of Management, February 27th
2019.

1 Introduction

Founded in 1843, St Columba's College ("the College") is a co-educational voluntary secondary school which provides a seven-day boarding structure, as well as catering for day students and day boarders through its six-day teaching programme. The College is a Church of Ireland foundation, but welcomes children of all religious backgrounds and none.

The Patron and Trustees of the College comprise a Board of Fellows who meet regularly to oversee its governance. The ethos of the College is laid down by the Fellows, to whom the Warden (the Principal) is accountable for the management of the College on a day-to-day basis, including the administration of the Admissions Policy. A Board of Management, comprising Fellows as well as parent and teacher representatives, also meets regularly to oversee the practical management of the College.

The practical operation of the processes of Admissions to the College is coordinated by an Admissions Office and managed by the Warden.

The process of applying for a secondary school place can be daunting and confusing for parents so we strongly recommend that applicants read through this Admissions Policy thoroughly to familiarise themselves with the particular way it works in St Columba's College.

The demand for places in the College is high every year and we expect this to continue, which may make it difficult to secure a place. Conscious of this, as well as the disappointment this can cause for families who are unsuccessful, the Board of Management are extremely careful to ensure that places are allocated as fairly as possible and will adhere strictly to the terms of this Admissions Policy.

2. Applying for a place in the College

All applications for places in the College should be submitted in hard copy on the official application form to Admissions Office, St Columba's College, Whitechurch, Dublin 16 along with the application fee (details on website). Applicants should also submit copies of recent school reports as well as information on any special interests or abilities they may have. The closing date for completed applications is 1st March in the year before entry.

The application form is available from the Admissions Office, on the website, www.stcolumbas.ie or by emailing admissions@stcolumbas.ie.

When an application is received by the College an email acknowledgement will be sent to the applicant within 21 days. It is the applicant's responsibility to ensure their application has been received on time by the College and a copy of the acknowledgement email should be retained by the applicant as proof. If you don't receive this acknowledgement within this time frame, please contact admissions@stcolumbas.ie to investigate the status of your application.

Only applications on the official form, completed in full and submitted on time will be considered when allocating places in the College.

Please note that requesting or returning an application form does not constitute an offer of a place and does not guarantee the offer of the place in the future. Applying for a place in the College means solely that the child is placed on the list of applicants for the year stated.

3. Availability of Places in the College

The Board of Management has determined that the maximum number of places available in the College in 2019 is as follows:

- Boarding Pupils: Shall not exceed 240 pupils
- Day Pupils and Day Boarders: Shall not exceed 110 pupils

This decision has been made based on the Board's determination of the capacity of the campus and also in light of the desire to maintain the distinctive boarding ethos of the College.

To maintain a healthy balance in terms of the College's pupil age profile, the Board of Management has determined that the optimum number in each year group shall be:

- Form I: 45
- Forms II to VI: 60

The main points of entry to the College are in Forms I, II, IV (Transition Year) and V, rather than in the State Certificate Examinations Forms, III and VI. In some years there is a Primary class before Form I (although not in 2019-20)

Where there is an excess demand for places in the College, and where one or more year groups are below optimal size, places shall be allocated to these year groups first, based on the mechanism for allocating places outlined in Section 4 below.

To be eligible for admission in Form I, pupils should have completed Sixth Class in primary school, or its equivalent, and should have reached the age of 12 years by 31st December in their first year in the College.

4. Allocation of Places

After the Closing Date, the Warden will consider all applications. The applications will be scored according to various criteria as follows (the ordering of these points has no significance):

- **Siblings of current or former pupils**
 - 20 points shall be awarded to any child who has a sibling who is attending, or has attended, the College.
- **Children of former pupils**
 - 20 points shall be awarded to any child who has a parent who attended the College.
- **Anglican background**
 - 20 points shall be awarded to any child from an Anglican background.
- **Protestant background**
 - 10 points shall be awarded to any child from a Protestant denominational background other than Church of Ireland.
 - 5 points shall be awarded to any child from other Christian traditions eg Catholic or Orthodox
- **Catchment Area**
 - 20 points shall be awarded to any child living within the 32 counties of Ireland.
- **Children of permanent staff**
 - 20 points shall be awarded to a child who has a parent on the permanent staff of the College.
- **Capacity to Integrate into the School**
 - 0-40 points shall be awarded at the discretion of the Warden based on his view of the capacity of the child to integrate into the College by reference to existing school attendance,

discipline record and teachers' feedback about involvement and effort. Special consideration will be given to the capacity of the child to integrate into a boarding lifestyle (even for day pupils who will still encounter a longer than usual day, Saturday school and the need to return for certain evening activities).

- **Potential to Contribute to the Life of the School**

- 0-40 points shall be awarded at the discretion of the Warden in respect of any special qualities or abilities that might add to the life of the School.

Once the applications have been scored, places will be allocated to those with the highest points, according to how many places there are each sector (boarding and day) and within each year group. For example, if there are three places available, the three highest scoring applicants will be offered places. If an applicant chooses not to accept a place, the fourth-placed candidate will be offered the place and so on until the places are filled.

In the event of two or more candidates tying for equal points and one place becoming available at this level of points, the place shall be decided by independently scrutinised computer-generated random selection.

Various rounds of offers of places shall take place in the course of the Michaelmas Term (ie between September and December) until all places have been allocated and accepted. If there are still vacancies, these will be filled during the rest of the school year prior to entry.

5. Restrictions on the Award of a Place in the College

It is recognised that a boarding school has a very particular culture and environment, which is not suited to every child. Regardless of the score allocated to an applicant under the mechanism outlined in Section 4 above, a place shall NOT be awarded if the Warden believes that the pupil would be unable to handle the distinctive boarding environment of the College.

6. Acceptance of a Place

Acceptance of an offer of a place in the School will be conditional on the School receiving, within the specified time period:

- a signed and completed Confirmation of Entry Form
- a copy of the College's Code of Conduct (enclosed with the offer letter), signed by the applicant's parents/guardians, indicating acceptance of the College's rules on discipline and other matters.
- payment of a non-refundable deposit (as notified on the College website).

Presentation of any evidence which is false or misleading will invalidate the application and lead to a loss of a place in the College. The Board of Management reserve the right to make any and all enquiries considered necessary to verify the residential address of an applicant and to withdraw the offer of a place to an applicant found to have submitted false or misleading information in this regard.

Acceptance of a place is taken as acceptance of all College policies. Refusal to sign the Code of Conduct or to accept the various St Columba's College School Policies will invalidate the application and lead to a loss of a place in the College.

The place in the College is also conditional on all fees being paid. Failure to pay fees on time and in full will lead to the loss of a place in the College.

7. Student Participation

The offer of a place is conditional on a pupil participating fully in the life of the College.

It is expected that pupils attending the College will participate in all aspects of College life. The College offers a broad Christian education through a wide curriculum of subjects approved by the Department of Education and Skills together with sports and extra-curricular activities. Religious Education, Assemblies and daily Chapel services following the liturgy of the Church of Ireland are an integral part of the ethos and educational structure of the College and compulsory for all pupils.

Pupils attending the College will complete their secondary schooling before sitting the Leaving Certificate. Requests to repeat or omit a year will only be considered in exceptional circumstances. Transition Year is compulsory for all pupils.

As specified under the Educational Welfare Act, 2000, all pupils registered at the College are obliged to attend school on a regular basis and parents/guardians also have obligations in this regard.

The Board of Management of the College is committed to excellence in education and the welfare of all pupils in its care. Once enrolled, a pupil is subject to the discipline of the College and entitled to remain as a pupil for as long as the discipline and rules of the College are obeyed and all fees are paid as they fall due.

8. Appeals

Step 1: Appeals against the College's failure to enrol a student should be made in writing to the Board of Management.

Step 2: Section 29 of the Education Act, 1998, gives parents (and students who have reached the age of 18) the right to appeal decisions made by a school's Board of Management relating to expulsions, suspensions or refusals to enrol a student. Subsequent to a decision by the St Columba's College Board of Management (under Step 1 above) to maintain the refusal to enrol a pupil, if applicants are in any way dissatisfied with the College's handling of their application, they are entitled to address an appeal to the Secretary General of the Department of Education & Skills via the Section 29 Appeals Administration Unit, Friar's Mill Road, Mullingar, Co. Westmeath. The contact phone number for the Unit is 076 110 8588, the email address is section29@education.gov.ie and further information is available on the website education.ie. This appeal must be lodged within 42 days of the Board's refusal to enrol.

9. Admissions Policy in future years

This Admissions Policy applies to the College's intake of pupils for the 2019-20 academic year only. The terms of this policy will be reviewed by the Board of Management on an annual basis and the Board retains discretion to affirm, amend or otherwise alter the terms as they deem appropriate. No assumption should be made that the Admissions Policy for entrants in 2020-21 or subsequent years will be on the same terms as this Admissions Policy.

10. Waiting List

Once all places have been allocated, a Waiting List will be established for unsuccessful applicants. If further places become available they shall be offered to applicants in the Waiting List in accordance with the terms of this policy and the mechanism outlined in Sections 3, 4 and 5 above). Late applicants will be scored and included on this Waiting List from the date their applications are received by the College.

11. Transfer Policy

The College admits pupils during the academic year, subject to:

- (i) a place being available.
- (ii) the place being filled according to the categorised priority criteria listed in Section 4 above.
- (iii) the Warden being satisfied with the reasons for the transfer and evidence provided by the pupil's current/former school that they will fit in easily to the College's particularly academic curriculum and tight codes of discipline.
- (iv) any particular SEN resources being in place prior to the pupil's arrival.

Where these criteria are not met in full, a place shall NOT be offered mid-year.

12. Assessments prior to Enrolment

Pupils joining the College in Form I are normally invited to sit assessments in Literacy, English and Mathematics in the year prior to entry. These assessments are designed to make sure that the right subject levels and supports are in place when the pupil arrives. They do not have any impact on the pupil's chances of securing a place in the College and therefore are not comprehended by the terms of this Admissions Policy.

Pupils in higher year groups are often interviewed by the Warden. Pupils from outside Ireland whose first language is not English may also be asked to sit an English language test to assess their suitability for integration into College life and their ability to cope with academic courses.

13. Scholarships

The College offers a number of scholarships, bursaries and awards, some of which are achieved prior to entry to the College. These awards are for pupils who already have a place in the College and therefore are not comprehended by the terms of this Admissions Policy.

14. Further Details

For further information on any aspect of the Admissions Process, please contact us by email at admissions@stcolumbas.ie.

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management on 27/2/2019