



# St. Columba's College

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## Admissions Policy

Updated June 2023, next due for review and ratification in October 2023

Person Responsible for updating policy: College Admissions Officer


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### About St. Columba's College

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 pupils 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 of 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.

## Characteristic Spirit and General Objectives of the School:

St. Columba's College is a Church of Ireland co-educational school with a Church of Ireland ethos under the patronage of the Fellows of the College.

"Church of Ireland/Anglican" ethos in the context of a Church of Ireland primary school means the ethos and characteristic spirit of the Anglican Christian tradition, which aims at promoting:

The education of the whole person regarding their spiritual, physical, intellectual, social, emotional aesthetic and moral development in harmony with the Christian faith as expressed in the Anglican tradition, which seeks to be characterised by inclusivity in approach, conveying certain values, being reflexive, affirming of the pupil, and caring. An Anglican ethos is focused on service to the local community as an out-working of the Gospel imperative to reach out to all people in a spirit of engagement and invitation to "come and see" (John 1:39). The ethos of a Church of Ireland school reflects the communal Scriptural values of the faith community, in a positive and encouraging pupil-centred understanding of living life in the Spirit of God (Gal. 5:25).

An ethos based on the Anglican Christian tradition seeks to nurture and encourage the formation of the intellectual, academic, sporting, social and religious abilities of each child within the framework of the community of faith. A Church of Ireland ethos encourages intellectual diversity of thought and encourages the individual to seek to understand themselves, the world around them and the connection between the world and the Divine. This understanding of school ethos promotes pluralism in thought and living, in the context of a Christian school community. Drawing on its Anglican tradition, the Church of Ireland School encourages parental involvement, highlighting the importance of the family in the social and emotional development of the child, and more broadly, the community of the school and church.

## Core Values

The Core Values of a Church of Ireland school might be characterised as comprising of:

- **Faith:** Living out the life-changing implications of a belief in the Divine, the person of Jesus Christ and recognises that every person is made in the image and likeness of God; conveying the reassurance and stability of Christian values in the life of the believer.
- **Excellence:** Striving to ensure that standards of teaching and the delivery of the curriculum is at the highest level of quality. Pursuing high standards in all things.

- **Justice:** Looking for fairness in our dealings with others, seeking to order our lives and the world around us in a context of equality for all people and to address unjust imbalances of power. To embrace compassion for our fellow human beings and to do all we can to make ourselves, our communities and our society conscious of the necessity for compassion, the cause of right and truth.
- **Reflexivity:** Open to continually being self-reflective, combatting our own biases, desires and motivations and engaging with pluralism of thought.
- **Affirming:** Conscious of the importance of affirming to all pupils and staff that they are valued, supported and loved. That they are unique in themselves, are entitled to live their own lives and not to be judged by any external standards, other than how we all engage with those around them and the world.
- **Caring:** Focusing on the experience of the young person to ensure that their experience of their time in school is accepting, happy and positive.

## Legal Undertaking:

In accordance with S.15 (2) (b) of the Education Act, 1998, the Board of Management of St. Columba's College shall uphold, and be accountable to the patron for so 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.

## 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 is approved by the school patron at the Board of Management meeting each June. 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. Columba's College's 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. 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 the 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 application form is available from the Admissions Office, on the website, [www.stcolumbas.ie](http://www.stcolumbas.ie) or by emailing [admissions@stcolumbas.ie](mailto:admissions@stcolumbas.ie).

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](mailto: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. Admission Statement

St. Columba's College will not discriminate in its admission of a pupil to the school on any of the following:

- A. the gender ground of the pupil or the applicant in respect of the pupil concerned,
- B. the civil status ground of the pupil or the applicant in respect of the pupil concerned,
- C. the family status ground of the pupil or the applicant in respect of the pupil concerned,
- D. the sexual orientation ground of the pupil or the applicant in respect of the pupil concerned,
- E. the religion ground of the pupil or the applicant in respect of the pupil concerned,
- F. the disability ground of the pupil or the applicant in respect of the pupil concerned,
- G. the ground of race of the pupil or the applicant in respect of the pupil concerned,
- H. the Traveller community ground of the pupil or the applicant in respect of the pupil concerned, or
- I. the ground that the pupil or the applicant in respect of the pupil 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.

## All denominational schools

St. Columba's College is a school whose objective is to provide education in an environment which promotes Christian values, in line with the tradition of the Church of Ireland, and does not discriminate where it refuses to admit as a pupil a person who is not Church of Ireland and it is proved that the refusal is essential to maintain the ethos of the school.

## 4. Admission of Pupils

This school shall admit each pupil seeking admission except where –

- A. the school is oversubscribed (please see section 8 below for further details)
- B. a parent of a pupil, 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 pupil.

## 5. Allocation of places (in the event that the school is oversubscribed):

After the Closing Date, the Warden will consider all applications. 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:

### Boarders:

- 50 points. In order to maintain the distinctive boarding ethos of the school, it is essential to ensure that those pupils looking for boarding places are given first priority.

### 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 and other Christian 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, e.g. Roman 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


- 0-60 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).

Once the applications have been scored, places will be allocated to those with the highest points, according to how many places there are in 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.

## 6. 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 pupil on a waiting list for admission to the school:

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- A. a pupil's academic ability, skills or aptitude;
  - B. the occupation, financial status, academic ability, skills or aptitude of a pupil's parents;
  - C. a requirement that a pupil, or his or her parents, attend an interview, open day or other meeting as a condition of admission, other than in the case of a boarding application;
  - D. 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).

## 7. Timeline for Allocation

- The school will commence accepting applications for day places on October 1st of the year prior to entry;
- The school will commence accepting applications for boarding places on October 1st two years prior to entry.
- The school will allow three weeks for applications to be received;
- Parents will be notified within two weeks of the result of their application;
- Parents of children who have received offers will have three weeks to accept the place.

The details of the exact dates of the allocation timeline for each academic year will be published a week before applications open, when the school is mandated to publish its Annual Admission Notice.


## 8. Availability of Places

The exact number of places being made available for entry in Year 1 each year will be published a week before the application process opens. The below is a guide based on the numbers allocated for entry in September 2023:

The Board of Management has determined that the maximum number of places available in the College in 2023 is as follows:

- Boarding Pupils: Shall not exceed 250 pupils
- Day Pupils and Day Boarders: Shall not exceed 100 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-III: 40-45
- Forms IV-VI: 65-75

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.

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.

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.

## 9. Pupil 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 examination. 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.

## 10. Decisions on Applications

All decisions on applications for admission to St. Columba's College will be based on the following:

- Our 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 16 below in relation to applications received outside of the admissions period and section 17 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.

## **11. 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 pupil 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 pupil's ranking against the selection criteria and details of the pupil'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).

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

In accepting an offer of admission from St. Columba's College you must indicate—

- 1) 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
- 2) 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.

## **13. 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. Columba's College where -

- 1) it is established that information contained in the application is false or misleading.
- 2) 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.
- 3) the parent of a pupil, 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 pupil; or

- 4) an applicant has failed to comply with the requirements of 'acceptance of an offer' as set out in section 10 above.
- 5) Failure of the parents to pay the confirmation of entry fee.

## 14. 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 pupils.

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

1. an application for admission to the school has been received,
2. an offer of admission to the school has been made, or
3. an offer of admission to the school has been accepted.

The list may include any or all of the following:


1. the date on which an application for admission was received by the school;
2. the date on which an offer of admission was made by the school;
3. the date on which an offer of admission was accepted by an applicant;
4. a pupil'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).

## 15. 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 pupils whose applications for admission to St. Columba's College 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 is in the order of priority assigned to the pupils' applications after the school has applied the selection criteria in accordance with this admission policy.

Applicant pupils 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 pupils on the waiting list, in accordance with the order of priority in relation to which the pupils have been placed on the list.

## **16. 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. Applicant pupils will be offered a place if a place is available. In the event that there is no place available, the name of the applicant pupil will be added to the waiting list in accordance with Section 13 of this policy.

## **17. Procedures for admission of pupils to other years and during the school year**

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

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. Applicant pupils will be offered a place in the relevant class if a place is available. In the event that the number of applications exceeds the number of available places in the relevant class, the school will apply the selection criteria set out in Section 6 of this policy to those applications. In the event that there is no place available, the name of the applicant pupil will be added to the waiting list in accordance with Section 13 of this policy.

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

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. Applicant pupils 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 pupil will be added to the waiting list in accordance with Section 13 of this policy.

## **18. Reviews/appeals**

Review of decisions by the Board of Management:

- The parent of the pupil, or in the case of a pupil who has reached the age of 18 years, the pupil, 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 pupil, or in the case of a pupil who has reached the age of 18 years, the pupil, 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 to 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.



## Signatures & Declarations

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Chair of the Board of Management

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Secretary of the Board of Management