



Thomastown National School

Thomastown, Golden, Cashel, Co. Tipperary

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Admission Policy of Thomastown National School

School Address: Thomastown, Golden, Cashel, Co. Tipperary.

School Website: www.thomastownns.com

Roll number: 04620D

School Patron: Archbishop Kieran O'Reilly (Diocese of Cashel & Emly)

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.

This policy was reviewed in November 2020. The policy was approved by the school patron on 29th November 2020. 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 Thomastown National School'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. Characteristic spirit and general objectives of the school

Thomastown National School is a Catholic co-educational primary school with a Catholic ethos under the patronage of the Archbishop/Bishop of Cashel and Emly.

“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, a living relationship with God and with other people; and
- (b) including the intellectual, physical, cultural, moral and spiritual aspects; 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 for 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 Thomastown National School 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.

Thomastown National School aims to provide a happy secure atmosphere in which learning is enjoyable and where all children can grow in confidence and independence.

Thomastown National School recognises that each pupil has individual needs. The school recognises that each child develops at his or her own pace. Therefore, we seek to guide pupils in realising their full potential and celebrate with them their sense of satisfaction, having done their best.

The school seeks to develop pupils thinking skills to enable them to have questioning minds and the ability to seek information. Each child is encouraged and guided in the development of sound study skills and a positive work ethic.

Through curriculum studies we seek to:

- expose children to a wide range of experience
- enable pupils to communicate effectively in literacy and numeracy
- encourage creativity
- develop an awareness of learning from the past
- develop children spiritually and make them aware of Christian teaching with emphasis on the Roman Catholic Faith

Thomastown National School has a strong commitment to the personal and academic welfare of each child. Therefore, we strive to provide for the holistic development of the child as a person.

3. Admission Statement

Thomastown 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.

All denominational schools

Thomastown 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 of the Catholic faith and it is proved that the refusal is essential to maintain the ethos of the school.

Note for Parents: the inclusion of the above wording was mandated by the Education (Admission to Schools) Act 2018.

Thomastown NS is a school which will establish a class, with the approval of the Minister of Education and Skills, which provides an education exclusively for students with a category or categories of special education needs specified by the Minister and may refuse to admit to the class a student who does not have the category of need specified.

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

The special class attached to Thomastown National School will provide an education exclusively for students with Autistic Spectrum Disorder and the school may refuse admission to this class, where the student concerned does not have the specified category of special educational needs that will be provided for in this class.

The special class is scheduled to open at the beginning of the 2021/2022 school year.

The maximum number of pupils in the ASD class will be 6 pupils.

Our ASD class will aim to offer an autism specific learning environment within our mainstream primary school.

The purpose of this special class will be to support children with ASD, who are experiencing, or would experience, difficulty in a mainstream class setting.

The ASD class will offer a positive and meaningful educational experience that will enable children to maximise their potential for learning and personal development.

This class will serve to prepare children with ASD to re-integrate into the mainstream school setting. Therefore, enrolment to this special class will only be available to children with ASD who, with the supports available in Thomastown National School, will have the capacity to, at least, partially integrate into a mainstream class.

Enrolment Procedure

The process of enrolling in our special class for pupils with ASD begins with an enquiry to the school. Parents should request to speak to the Principal with regard to enrolment enquiries.

Parents will be directed to this enrolment policy.

An Enrolment Application form for the ASD class which should be forwarded to the Principal along with the following documentation:

- Child's Birth Certificate
- All relevant psychological reports and/or multi-disciplinary reports

The closing date for applications will be included on the Admission Notice as outlined in our School's Admission Policy.

All applications received by the closing date will be considered.

The acknowledgement of receipt of an enrolment application form, a psychological report and a written recommendation does not constitute an offer of a place in the school. It is simply the recording of an application for admission to our school.

Once applications for the special class have been received, they will be reviewed by the ASD Enrolment Team. (This team will be made up of the Principal, the Special Class teacher and the Special Education Teacher). Applications will be assessed to ensure that the application fulfils the enrolment criteria. The Special Education Needs Organiser (SENO) will be consulted as part of this process. The ASD Enrolment Team may also seek the advice of the school's NEPS Psychologist (National Educational Psychological Service) with regard to an application.

Applications will only be considered on the basis of a diagnostic or psychological report stating that the child has a primary diagnosis of autism meeting the DSM IV/V or ICD 10 criteria.

The report must also contain a recommendation that a special class placement in a mainstream school is necessary and suitable for the child.

The child must be capable of integrating into mainstream, even at a minimal level, at an appropriate age level.

When this process has been completed the applicant secures a place on the list of applicants to enrol. This list is organised on the basis of our enrolment criteria outlined below.

When a place becomes available, the parents of the child will be contacted and their child will be offered a place in the ASD class.

If the place is accepted the parents and Principal will complete the "Notification to NCSE of enrolment in a special class". This form will be forwarded to the Special Education Needs Organiser.

The regular Enrolment Registration Form will also need to be completed by parents once their child has secured a place in the special class.

Enrolment Criteria

Enrolment to the special class will only be available to children with ASD who, with the supports available in Thomastown NS, will have the capacity to, at least, partially integrate into a mainstream classroom.

If the number of children on the list of applicants to enrol exceeds the number of places available, the following criteria will apply in priority order, beginning with number one – subject to meeting all the criteria and completing all the procedures outlined in this policy.

1. Pupils currently enrolled in our mainstream school and seeking to transfer to the ASD class.
2. Applicants with siblings currently enrolled in the school.
3. Children of current school staff.
4. Children living within the school catchment area.
5. Children living outside the school catchment area.

All unsuccessful qualifying applicants will be placed on the Placement List, in accordance with the above criteria for places that may become available during the school year.

Transfers

Pupils may transfer to the ASD class during the school year subject to availability of places. Pupils transferring must enter the same class level that they are leaving, and have the necessary diagnosis and recommendations as outlined above. The school may request other relevant documentation if the pupil is transferring from another school. All documents need to be received in order for the application to be deemed fully complete.

Discharge from the Special Class

It is school policy to facilitate the discharge of pupils from the special classes for children with ASD once they reach the age of thirteen. Pupils who reach the age of thirteen after September 30th in any year will be permitted to complete that academic year. This means a June discharge in the following year.

Discharge may also be recommended after the first year if the Admissions Team, after consultation with the parents/guardian, feel that the placement is no longer appropriate.

Discharge from the special class may also happen when a pupil is fully integrated into the mainstream school.

5. Admission of Students

The Board of Management of Thomastown National School will have regard for relevant Department of Education and Skills (DES) Guidelines in relation to class size and staffing provision and/or any other relevant requirements concerning accommodation including physical space and the health and welfare of children.

Children applying to enrol in Thomastown National School must have reached the age of 4 years by August 31st of the year that they will commence school.

The Board of Management reserves the right to determine the maximum number of children in each separate classroom bearing in mind the Department of Education and Skills Guidelines in relation to class size and staffing provision.

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

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

Note for Parents: the inclusion of the above wording was mandated by the Education (Admission to Schools) Act 2018.

The special class attached to Thomastown National School provides an education exclusively for students with ASD 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 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:

1. Applicants with siblings currently enrolled in the school;
2. Children residing in the parish, priority eldest;
3. Children of staff members, priority eldest;
4. Random selection (independently verified).

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:

Priority to eldest in accordance with the above criteria.

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 pre-school 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;
- (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 siblings of a student attending or having 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 Thomastown 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.

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 17 below for further details).

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

In accepting an offer of admission from Thomastown 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 Thomastown 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;
- (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 Thomastown 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 Thomastown 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:

Applications for enrolment during the school year will be considered subject to school policy, available space and the provision of information concerning attendance and the child's educational progress.

Such applications will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis but will normally only be considered for admission on the first day of each new term unless the applicant is newly resident in the area.

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:

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 Thomastown 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 Thomastown 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.

Junior Infants, with the exception of students transferring from another school, may only be admitted to the school prior to the beginning of the new school year.

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

The Board of Thomastown 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

Our school is of a Catholic ethos and, in keeping with that ethos, children of all or no other faith are welcome to apply to this school.

We respect the decision of parents to withdraw their child/children from taking part in the religious education curriculum, religious ceremonies, school Masses, etc.

The following are the school's arrangements for students, where the parent(s)/guardian(s) have requested that the student attend the school without attending religious instruction (etc.) 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)/guardian(s) of the student, to discuss how the request may be accommodated by the school.

18. Reviews/appeals

Review of decisions by the board of Management

The parents/guardians of 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 parents/guardians of 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.

The policy was ratified by the Board of Management of Thomastown National School on 7th December 2020.

Signed: *Michael Fitzgerald*

Chairperson, Board of Management