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Admission Policy Saplings Special School, Goresbridge. Roll No 20377M

Introduction

This Admission Policy complies with the requirements of the Education Act 1998, the Education (Admission to Schools) Act 2018 and the Equal Status Act 2000. In drafting this policy, the board of management of the school has consulted with school staff, the school patron and with parents of children attending the school. The policy was initially approved by the school patron in October 2020.

The relevant dates and timelines for the admission process for Saplings Goresbridge are set out in the school's admission notice which will be published annually on the school website. This policy must be read in conjunction with the annual admission notice. The application form for admission for the academic year 2027/28 (See Appendix 1) is available as follows:

- ✓ By downloading from the website http://saplingskilkenny.ie
- ✓ By contacting the school office on 0599775750
- ✓ By writing to: The Secretary, Saplings Special School, Goresbridge, Co. Kilkenny, R95D2N2
- ✓ By emailing principal.kilkenny@saplings.org

Characteristic spirit of the school

Saplings School Goresbridge is a co-educational specialist school, providing quality education for pupils with autism and complex needs . The school offers a range of child-centred, autism specific education which draws on a range of evidence based interventions. The school recognises that all appropriate means of education and support are valuable in assisting all the children to develop and reach their full potential, as detailed in our mission statement. Children are actively encouraged to participate in community life, and are enabled to be as independent as possible. The school works very closely with parents and other professionals in order to ensure the best personal and educational outcomes for our children.

Aims and Objectives

- To provide a quality driven, appropriate educational service to all children in the school, within the requirements of all recent legislation pertaining to Special Needs Education.
- To tailor each child's programme to their individual needs and facilitate the development of each child's unique potential.
- To enhance the communicative and social skills of the children in the school.
- To strive towards the integration of children into community life, and, where possible, into mainstream, having regard for levels of disability, available resources and suitability for such integration.
- To interact with and develop community links in special education, autism and evidence-based teaching practices on a local, national, and international level.

Charity No: 20140373

Taking into account the Department regulations and programmes, the rights of the patron as set out in the Education Act, and the funding available, the school supports the principles of:

- Provision of evidence based appropriate education which is child centred and individualised to each pupil and takes account of the autism specific nature of provision.
- The provision of autism specific education using evidence based, data driven interventions including Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA), AAC, Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS), Social Stories, Lámh, Treatment and Education of Autistic and Communication Handicapped Children (TEACCH), etc. by appropriately qualified professional staff.
- Inclusiveness, particularly with reference to the enrolment of children with a disability or other special education need.
- Equality of access and participation in the school.
- Parental choice in relation to enrolment.
- Respect for the diversity of values, beliefs, traditions, languages and ways of life in society.
- Co-education and committed to encouraging all children to explore their full range of abilities and opportunity
- Active participation by parents in the life of the school, positively acknowledging and affirming the professional role of all staff.

Admission Statement

Saplings 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.

Saplings Special School, Goresbridge 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.

Saplings Special School Goresbridge will cooperate with the National Council for Special Education in the performance by the Council of its functions under the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act 2004 relating to the provision of education to children with special educational needs, including in particular by the provision and operation of a special class or classes when requested to do so by the Council.

Saplings Special School Goresbridge will comply with any direction served on the patron or the board, as the case may be, under section 37A and any direction served on the board under section 67(4B) of the Education Act.

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

Saplings Special School, Goresbridge, with the approval of the Minister for Education and Skills, provides an education exclusively for students with an autism spectrum disorder and complex needs.

Admission of Students

This admission policy upholds the framework of the relevant legislation set forth for Special Schools in Section 2 of the EPSEN Act 2004 which states that a child with special educational needs shall be educated in an inclusive setting unless such an arrangement is inconsistent with the best interests of the child or with the effective provision of education for those children with whom the child is to be educated.

Admission to Saplings Goresbridge will therefore be confined to pupils for whom there is clear evidence that enrolment in a special school is in the best interests of the child. This will be determined by the multi-disciplinary team after a comprehensive review of all supporting documentation..

The school welcomes any referrals for enrolment from any student aged between 4 and 18 years who has a confirmed diagnosis on the Autism Spectrum (as per DSM IV or V or OCD-10 criteria by a certified clinical/educational psychologist OR multi-disciplinary assessment of same by a professional team which includes a clinical/educational psychologist) and for whom a Special School is considered to be an appropriate placement.

This school shall admit each student seeking admission whose application fulfils the above criteria, except where:

a) the school is oversubscribed
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

Saplings Goresbridge provides an education exclusively for students with autism and complex needs and may refuse admission to a student, where the student does not have the specified category of special educational needs provided for by this school.

Eligibility Criteria

Children and young people are eligible for enrolment in a special school for autism when the following is provided in support of such an application:

Professional reports outlining:

- Diagnosis of autism as per DSM IV/V or ICD 10/11 from a psychologist, psychiatrist or multi-disciplinary report

AND

- A demonstration of the understanding of complexity of the child's overall need/s evidenced in the reports

AND

- Given the severity or complexity of the child's support needs, a clear professional recommendation as to what educational placement would be most appropriate to best meet the child's needs, along with the rationale for same

AND

- A letter from the NCSE confirming that the child is known to them and that the child has the required diagnosis and recommendation for a special school for autism

Prior to enrolment

Before an application is made, parents/guardians should ensure that:

- The child will be 4 on or before the 1st of September of the year in which it is proposed to enrol the child.
- The child has a recent and confirmed diagnosis on the Autism Spectrum and that reports submitted state that a Special School is likely to be an appropriate placement.
- The application form is completed correctly and fully, incomplete applications will not be considered.
- The application is accompanied by the required letter from the NCSE.
- All supporting documentation is submitted, including psychological reports, occupational therapy reports, behaviour support plans, speech and language reports, school/pre-school and medical reports etc

Submission of all documents by the closing date is mandatory and the responsibility for the supporting documentation lies solely with the applicant. Applications are not reviewed prior to the closing date and the school assumes no responsibility for reviewing, verifying or notifying applicants of missing or incomplete documentation. Applications that fail to include all required documentation do not meet admission requirements and will not be considered.

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. Siblings of existing pupils
2. Geographical proximity to the school
3. Siblings of past pupils

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 school will use a random selection generator to award the school place. This may be in the form of an internet based generator, or a draw conducted by a third party.

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 Saplings Goresbridge 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 Saplings Goresbridge 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.

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; (other than those criteria) in relation to their diagnosis of autism as aforementioned
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 other than a sibling 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

Decisions on applications

All decisions on applications for admission to Saplings Goresbridge 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.

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.

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 decision

Acceptance of an offer of a place by an applicant

In accepting an offer of admission from Saplings Goresbridge, 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.

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 Saplings Goresbridge 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 previously

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.

Late Applications

All applications for admission received after the closing date as outlined in the annual admission notice will be accepted providing they meet the criteria for enrolment. Late applications will considered only after all other applications have been dealt with and places offered.

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

Applications are invited from all students aged 4-18 who fulfil the enrolment criteria as previously outlined.

Declaration in relation to the non-charging of fees

The Board of Saplings Goresbridge 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.

Review of decisions by the Board of Management

The parent of the student, or in the case of a student who has reached the age of 18 years, the student, may request the board to review a decision to refuse admission. Such requests must be made in accordance with Section 29C of the Education Act 1998.

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

The board will conduct such reviews in accordance with the requirements of the procedures determined under Section 29B and with section 29C of the Education Act 1998.

Note: Where an applicant has been refused admission due to the school being oversubscribed, the applicant **must request a review** of that decision by the board of management prior to making an appeal under section 29 of the Education Act 1998.

Where an applicant has been refused admission due to a reason other than the school being oversubscribed, the applicant **may request a review** of that decision by the board of management prior to making an appeal under section 29 of the Education Act 1998.

Right of appeal

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

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

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

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

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

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

Saplings Goresbridge Admission Policy

This Admissions Policy was initially drafted by the Principal, in conjunction with the staff, parents and Board of Management. It was subsequently presented to the Patron for approval. It was reviewed and ratified by the Board at its meeting on **5th October 2026.** It is due for review annually or in line with legislative guidelines or at the behest of the Department of Education. It will form part of the school plan which is located in the school reception. It will be published on the school website or can be emailed on request.

Appendix A –Application for enrolment

Name of child	
Date of birth	
PPS No:	
Parents names:	
Telephone number:	**Mobile 1:** **Mobile 2:**
If you change your mobile number during the school year please inform us immediately in order to keep records up to date in case of an emergency.	
Address	
Eircode	
Email Address	
Educational History to date:	
Has your child been assessed by a psychologist and been given a diagnosis of autism?	
If your child has not been formally assessed, please note that Saplings requires a formal Ed. Psych report which states that enrolment in an autism specific special school is in the best interest of the child	
Other relevant information:	

Parental permissions	**Yes**	**No**
I give permission to allow my child's photograph/image without name to be included in school-related activities, competitions, closed social media pages, school website etc. (delete as applicable)		
I will read the schools policy on behaviour and crisis intervention and will fully support the school in implementing same.		
I consent to my child's participation in the RSE Programme		
I consent to my child's participation in school programmes for personal safety such as Stay safe/SoSAFE		
I consent to my child participating in community outings and trips.		
I give permission to allow my family details (name, address, date of birth, etc.) to be given to agencies such as HSE (school nurse, doctor, dentist), etc.		
During your child's time in Saplings Goresbridge, it may be necessary from time-to-time for teachers to carry out diagnostic testing with your child on an individual basis in order to help them in their educational development. I give permission for any necessary diagnostic tests to be carried out with my child.		
In the event of an emergency or accident, a member of staff will use his/her discretion and bring your child to a Doctor/Hospital. Every effort will be made to contact you. I authorise that at their discretion a member of staff may bring my child/children to a Doctor/Hospital if an emergency arises.		

I declare the above information to be correct and understand that it will be treated as confidential.

Signed:
Parents/Guardians: ……..Date:……..

Parent/Guardian: ……..Date:……..

Please ensure that you have:
- ✓ Signed and dated the form
- ✓ Included a Birth Certificate with this form.
- ✓ Enclosed any relevant professional reports
- ✓ NB Incomplete applications will not be considered