CEIST
Catholic Education
An Irish Schools Trust

ADMISSION POLICY OF ST. COLUMBA'S COLLEGE

SCHOOL ADDRESS: STRANORLAR, LIFFORD, CO. DONEGAL

ROLL NUMBER: 62861F

NAME OF PATRON: CEIST

CHARITY NUMBER: 20204529



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 was approved by the School Patron, CEIST, on **11 March 2026.** 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 admission process are set out in the school's annual admission notice which is published 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

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. 'Catholic Ethos' in the context of a Catholic voluntary secondary school means the ethos and characteristic spirit of the Roman Catholic Church which aims to promote:

- the full and harmonious development of all aspects of the person, including the intellectual, physical, cultural, moral and spiritual aspects; and
- a living relationship with God and with other people; and
- a philosophy of life inspired by belief in God and in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus; and
- the formation of the pupils in the Catholic faith 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.

St. Columba's College draws on the richness of the religious and cultural heritage of the past, interpreted and lived out for students living in today's world. The charism of our founders, the Sisters of Mercy who began this school is of very significant importance in the life of the school.

As a CEIST school, St. Columba's College values teaching as one of the most important of all human activities. Our school seeks to build a quality learning community that welcomes, and bears witness to the Gospel values of Jesus Christ, expressed through the lens of the CEIST Charter.

These are encapsulated in the core values which are intended to support and nourish the lives of the people who are at the heart of our schools.

- **Promoting Spiritual and Human Development**
- **Achieving Quality in Teaching and Learning**
- **Showing Respect for Every Person**
- **Creating Community**
- **Being Just and Responsible**

St. Columba's College is inspired by the words of Jesus Christ to his disciples, *'I have come that they may have life and have it to the full'* (Jn 10:10). Reflective of this, St. Columba's College provides a rich, holistic education in the Catholic tradition where engagement with and development of the whole person; the intellectual, moral, religious, physical, spiritual and psychological are at the core of our practice.

Education has as its goal the formation of a human person who is free, rational and mature in relationships. St. Columba's College offers educational opportunities which promote excellence so that students can respond responsibly and creatively to their own lives, the lives of others and to the earth, which is our common home.

In St. Columba's College the dignity and uniqueness of every human being as a child of God is acknowledged and affirmed. The Catholic school is an inclusive community, ideally built on love and formed by the interaction and collaboration of its various components: students, parents, teachers, non-teaching staff and members of the Board of Management. Catholic schools are also outward looking. They are connected to their local parish and Diocese and other local organisations which enrich the life of the school. Our school draws on the rich resources of the local community and, in turn, contributes to the life of the local community.

As a Catholic school, Religious Education is central to our curriculum. Alongside Religious Education, the school supports the formation in faith of our students through many school-based experiences of prayer and ritual. All students' spiritual growth is further enhanced through such areas as sport, language, nature, art, poetry and music.

3. Admission Statement

St. Columba's College 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, 'gender ground', 'civil status ground', 'family status ground', 'sexual orientation ground', 'religion ground', 'disability ground', 'discriminate', 'ground of race' and 'Traveller community ground' shall be construed in accordance with section 3 of the Equal Status Act 2000.

- St. Columba's College 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.
- St. Columba's College 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.

Post-primary Denominational Schools

St. Columba's College is a school whose objective is to provide education in an environment which promotes certain religious values and does not discriminate where it admits a student of the Catholic faith in preference to others.

All Denominational Schools

St. Columba's College 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.

School with Special Education Class(es)

St. Columba's College is a school which has established a class, with the approval of the Minister for Education, which provides an education exclusively for students with a category or categories of special educational needs specified by the Minister and may refuse to admit to the class a student who does not have the category of needs specified.

4. Categories of Special Educational Needs Catered for in the Special Class

School with special education class(es)

St. Columba's College with the approval of the Minister for Education, has established a class to provide an education exclusively for students with Autism (DSM IV/V or ICD 10/11)

5. Admission of Students

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

All Denominational Schools

St. Columba's College 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.

School with Special Education Class(es)

The special class attached to St. Columba's College provides an education exclusively for students with Autism (DSM IV/V or ICD 10/11) 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 in this class. The following evidence is required in support of such an application:

Professional report(s) outlining:

- Diagnosis of Special Educational Needs of Autism (DSM IV/V or ICD 10/11)

AND

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

AND

- Given the severity or complexity of the child's support needs, a clear professional recommendation as to what educational placement type 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 class for Autism.

6. OVERSUBSCRIPTION

In the event that the school is oversubscribed, St. Columba's College will, when deciding on applications for admission, apply the following selection criteria in the order listed below to those eligible* applications that are received within the timeline for receipt of applications as set out in the school's annual admission notice. (Note: * DEY Post Primary eligibility - In order to be eligible for enrolment applicants must have completed 6th Class (or its equivalent) and have reached the age of 12 years on the 1st January in the calendar year following entry to second level):

1. Applicants who have a sibling (brother/sister) who is attending or has attended (past student) the college. A past student is any person who completed the Junior Certificate, Leaving Certificate (Established) or Leaving Certificate Applied Programme in the college.
2. Applicants who have a parent, working as a staff member in the college, teaching or nonteaching, for at least two years at the time of the application.
3. Applicants who have a parent who is a past student of the college. A past student is any person who completed the Junior Certificate, Leaving Certificate (Established) or Leaving Certificate Applied Programme in the college.
4. Applicants who have attended one of the feeder primary schools as listed below. For the purpose of enrolment as outlined in this Admissions Policy, the Board of Management defines the catchment area of St. Columba's College as including the following primary schools only (in no particular order of priority with regard to criteria);
    - Convoy Joint National School (05230S)
    - Donaghmore National School (17241Q)
    - Dooish National School (19333I)
    - Dromore National School (16349I)
    - Glencovitt National School (17575W)
    - Gleneely National School (18172F)
    - Killygordon National School (18874O)
    - Robertson National School, Stranorlar (18731P)
    - Sessiaghoneill National School (17607J)
    - Scoil Bhríde, Convoy (18737E)
    - Scoil Mhuire B&C, Stranorlar (19927O)
    - Scoil Phádraig, Drumkeen (17057A)
    - Scoil Náisiúnta An Choimin (17564R)
    - Scoil Náisiúnta Naomh Samhthann, Drumdoit (17040G)
    - Scoil Náisiúnta Taobhóige (17553M)
    - St. Columba's National School, Ballylast (17956L)
    - St. Mary's National School, Castlefinn (14910S)
    - Welchtown National School (18703K)
5. All other applicants will be considered and offered places once applications are received within the timeline for receipt of applications as set out in the school's annual admission notice.

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:

Where the number of places available is less than the number of applicants in each of the categories above (1-5), places will be offered through a random selection draw within the relevant grouping. The random selection draw will be conducted by an Admissions Committee appointed by the Board of Management. This committee will consist of the Chairperson, Principal and an external independent draw scrutineer. A waiting list will be compiled in the order determined by each random selection draw.

IN ADDITION, IF THE SPECIAL CLASS IS OVERSUBSCRIBED PRIORITY MAY BE GIVEN TO:

- Students already enrolled in the school with the required diagnosis as outlined in Section 4 and the supporting evidence as outlined in Section 5.

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 other than in relation to a special class insofar as it is necessary in order to ascertain whether or not the student has the category of special educational needs concerned

(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, in the case of St. Columba's College wishing to include a selection criterion based on (1) siblings of a student attending or having attended the school and (2) a parent of a student having attended the school.

In relation to (2) a parent having attended, St. Columba's College will only apply this criterion to a maximum of 25% of the available spaces as set out in the school's annual admission notice.

(g) the date and time on which an application for admission was received by the school,

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

8. Decisions on Applications

All decisions on applications for admission to St. Columba's College 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 18 below for further details).

10. Acceptance of an Offer of a Place by an Applicant

In accepting an offer of admission from St. Columba's College 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 St. Columba's College 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 board 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).

This data may be further shared with the Department of Education for further processing to facilitate the efficient admission of students. This is in accordance with the Minister for Education's statutory function to ensure that there is made available to each person resident in the State a level and quality of education appropriate to meeting the needs and abilities of that person and to plan and co-ordinate the provision of education in recognised schools, having regard to the resources available.'

13. Waiting List in the Event of Oversubscription

In the event of there being more applications to the school year concerned than places available, a waiting list of students whose applications for admission to St. 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 of St. Columba's College is in the order of priority assigned to the students' applications after the school has applied the selection criteria in accordance with this admission policy.

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

14. Late Applications

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

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:

- Application Forms are available from the school office. An offer of a place can only be made if there is space in the year group in question.
- If there is no place available, the student will be placed on the school's Waiting List.
- All such applications for admission 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.

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:

- Application Forms are available from the school office. An offer of a place can only be made if there is space in the year group in question.
- If there is no place available, the student will be placed on the school's Waiting List.
- All such applications for admission 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.

16. Declaration in Relation to the Non-Charging of Fees

The board of St. Columba's College 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.

Exceptions apply only in relation to fee charging post primary schools, the boarding element in Boarding Schools and admission to post leaving cert or further education courses run by post-primary schools.

17. Arrangements Regarding Students Not Attending Religious Instruction

The following are the school's arrangements for students, where the parents or in the case of a student who has reached the age of 18 years, the student, who has requested that the student attend the school without attending religious instruction in the school. These arrangements will not result in a reduction in the school day of such students:

A parent of a student, or a student who has reached the age of 18, who wishes to attend St. Columba's College without attending religious instruction should make a written request to the Principal. A meeting will be then be arranged with the parent or the student, as the case may be, to discuss how that request may be accommodated by the school.

18. Reviews/Appeals

Review of Decisions by the Board of Management

The parent of the student, or in the case of a student who has reached the age of 18 years, the student, may request the board 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.

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.

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.

This Admission Policy was ratified by the Board of Management of St. Columba's College on **23rd September, 2026.**

P. J. McGowan

Chairperson of the Board of Management

Jennifer Kelly

Secretary to the Board of Management