

ENROLMENT

Policy

This policy has been drawn up by the Board of Management (BOM) in accordance with the provisions of the Education Act 1998. It sets out the rationale and process by which children may be enrolled into Rathfarnham Educate Together National School (RETNS).

We offer a child-centred, co-educational, multi-denominational and democratically run national school on Loreto Avenue, Rathfarnham, Dublin 14, under the patronage of Educate Together. We provide single stream education from junior infants to sixth class. We deliver curricular programmes prescribed by the Department of Education and Skills (DES), including an ethical core curriculum. We operate within the regulations laid down by the DES and within the constraints of the grants and teacher resources provided by it.

Within this context, we support the principles of diversity, inclusiveness, equality of access, equality of participation and parental choice. Notwithstanding, we stress that any enrolment policy operates to ration a limited supply of school places in face of a level of demand which frequently exceeds that supply. We believe that our current approach towards enrolment best reconciles numerous competing factors. However, we will monitor and evaluate the operation of our policy and procedures on an ongoing basis to ensure that it continues to do so.

Procedures

1 Responsibilities

1.1 BOM

The BOM has responsibility for ensuring that this document is in existence and is up-to-date. In doing so, it will research and consult widely. The BOM reserves the right to make any changes to this document as circumstances change and will inform those affected by any such changes as a matter of urgency.

1.2 Principal and Deputy Principal

Day-to-day responsibility for managing enrolment rests with the Principal. These duties will be assumed by the Deputy Principal in her absence. The Principal will ensure that the school's enrolment policy is publicised on an ongoing basis. The Principal is also the first port of call for anyone with any queries in relation to this document. The Principal will be assisted where necessary by the Chairperson and other members of the BOM.

1.3 Enrolment Officer

The BOM will appoint one person within the school to act as Enrolment Officer. This person will deal with the day-to-day administration of school enrolment.

1.4 Parents & guardians

In order to minimise confusion and potential disappointment, parents and guardians are requested to read carefully the detail of our policy and procedures for enrolment into the school. Unlike many other national schools, we **do not** operate a system of automatic entry into the school on the basis of religious affiliation, having a sibling in the school, catchment area, etc.

Parents and guardians are wholly responsible for notifying the school in writing of any changes to their contact details and any other relevant matters. Failure to do so may result in not gaining a place in the school.

2 Enrolment criteria

Pre-enrolment is the placing of a child's name onto a waiting list for the appropriate class year. Usually, this class is junior infants although waiting lists are operated where there is demand for each of the classes between senior infants and sixth class. The following criteria apply to all:

2.1 Second birthday rule

The earliest date at which a child's name may be entered on the school's pre-enrolment list is the date of her/his second birthday ¹.

2.2 First come first served rule

Priority for a place in the school is determined **solely** by the date on which a child's name is entered on the pre-enrolment list.

¹ This rule came into effect for children enrolling from 5 November 2010.

2.3 Age cut-off rule

A child must have reached her/his fourth birthday on or before 31 March of the calendar year in which s/he proposes to start school ².

2.4 Behaviour policy rule

Any child that enters the school is expected to abide by the school's behaviour policy.

3 Application procedure

A pre-enrolment form must be submitted for each individual child. Parents and guardians are encouraged to use the on-line form available on the school website (www.retns.ie) but may call into the school for a form or request a form by telephone (01 - 493 8677) if they so prefer.

As each completed form is received, it is dated and entered on to the pre-enrolment list for the relevant class in strict priority order (provided that all relevant information has been provided; if not, the form will be returned). Each pre-enrolment will be acknowledged in writing within 21 days of receipt (by automatically generated email if done on-line). It will be made clear that places will be offered to those on the pre-enrolment list in strict priority order until the class is filled. Completing the form and receiving the acknowledgement is therefore in no way a guarantee of securing a place in the school.

4 Offer, acceptance and deferral procedure

4.1 Offer for junior infants places

Junior infants places are offered from the start of the second term of the school year for entry into the school the following September. Parents and guardians are requested to complete and return an acceptance form by a specified date. This form offers two options:

- Confirmation that the place will be accepted
- Request for deferral to the pre-enrolment list for junior infants for September of the following year.

If written confirmation is not received by the date specified, the child's name will be removed from the list and the school will seek no further contact with the family. Once the class is filled, parents and guardians will be informed in writing that they have been unsuccessful. They will be offered the opportunity

² This rule will come into full effect from 1 September 2015. However, all parents and guardians, with children on the pre-enrolment list prior to 5 November 2010 will be strongly encouraged to delay their children's school starting age to four and a half.

to stay on the waiting list until the start of the coming school year and/or to defer to the pre-enrolment list for junior infants or senior infants for September of the following year.

Any parents/guardians who choose to apply *after* the class is already filled, in the hope of their child(ren) starting in RETNS the following September, will be informed in writing that they have, or have not, been successful at the beginning of the school year at the latest.

4.2 Offer for places in senior infants to sixth class

Places higher up in the school are offered in the second term of the school year for entry into the school the following September. Parents and guardians are requested to complete and return an acceptance form by a specified date. This form offers only the option to accept a place.

If written confirmation is not received by the date specified, the child's name will be removed from the list and the school will seek no further contact with the family. Once the class is filled, parents and guardians will be informed in writing that they have been unsuccessful. If they wish to continue to seek a place for their child in the school, they will be required to make a new application each year.

4.3 The situation for mid-year entrants

Any requests for class places outside of the ordinary start of the school year will be dealt with as follows:

- Requests made between 1 September and 31 March may be facilitated if there is capacity in the relevant class.
- Requests made between 1 April and 31 August will be pending until contact has been made by the school with the parents/guardians of children on the waiting list for that class due to start the following September. Therefore, a child on the waiting list will have priority over a new child seeking a place at this point in the school year.

4.4 Acceptance

Parents and guardians accepting an offer of a junior infant place in the school will be invited to an information day and a visit for children during the last term of the school year preceding the children's commencement. Individualised arrangements can be made for the introduction of older children and their parents and guardians into the school.

Parents and guardians who accept a place for their child but subsequently decide not to use this place, are requested to inform the school in writing at the earliest opportunity, so that another child may receive a place in the school. Any monies (for example, book fees) paid to the school prior to this time are non-refundable.

4.5 Deferral

If a decision is made to defer a junior infants place, the child's name will be slotted into the following year's list according to her/his original date of pre-enrolment. It should be noted, therefore, that a deferral does not necessarily guarantee a school place the following year.

5 Procedure for children with special educational needs

We welcome the inclusion of children with special educational needs in the school. If it becomes apparent before or after pre-enrolling a child that s/he has special educational needs, including special health or disability needs, parents and guardians must disclose this to the Principal at the earliest opportunity in order to best facilitate the child. The Principal may request a copy of the child's psychological, medical or other relevant report, or if unavailable, request that the child be assessed immediately. The purpose of the report(s) is to assist the school in establishing the child's unique educational needs and to profile the support services required to meet those needs. It may be necessary for the BOM to defer the enrolment of a particular child pending the receipt of report(s) and/or the provision of appropriate resources by the DES to meet the child's identified needs.

6 Procedure for temporary moves

If a family is moving for a period of time of less than one year (for example, for reasons of employment) and it is necessary for a child to be taken out of school for this period, the timeframe for return must be agreed in advance with the Principal. The place can only be held open for a child provided that s/he returns to school on the agreed date. If this criterion is not met, a new application for enrolment will have to be made. If a child is to be educated elsewhere, a letter of transfer from the new school must be sent to RETNS as a matter of urgency, regardless of the length of absence.

7 Decision-making process

Whilst recognising the rights of parents and guardians to send their child(ren) to a school of their choice, the BOM is responsible for upholding the rights of the existing school community. This requires balanced judgement that acts in the interests of all children. The BOM reserves the right to determine the maximum number of children in each class, taking account of the availability of physical space, the educational needs of children of a particular age, the presence of children with special educational needs, DES class size guidelines, and any other relevant factors.

8 Appeals procedure

If parents and guardians are unhappy that their child has not received a place in the school, the Principal or, if necessary, the Chairperson of the BOM, are very willing to explain the rationale and operation of the school's enrolment policy. Any parents and guardians who, after this, still wish to appeal a decision not to enrol a child into the school may do so by following the DES Section 29 appeals process (see www.education.ie).

9 Data protection

Any personal data relating to children and their parents and guardians will be gathered, used, stored and destroyed in accordance with current data protection legislation.

10 Review

This policy and these procedures will be amended as a result of changed circumstances, and shall in any case undergo full review in 2015.

Approved by the BOM on 24 September 2013.