

ABBHEY VOCATIONAL SCHOOL

DONEGAL TOWN



Admissions Policy

Updated May 2015

ADMISSIONS POLICY - CONTENTS

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1. Scope of Policy

This policy has been drawn up in consultation with the Board of Management, Staff, Parents and Students of the Abbey Vocational School and has been approved and adopted by the Board of Management. The policy applies to all pupils who wish:

1. to enrol into the Abbey Vocational School
2. to enrol into the Transition Year or Leaving Certificate Applied Programme in the Abbey Vocational School
3. to enrol into the ASD class in the Abbey Vocational School
4. to repeat the Leaving Certificate in the Abbey Vocational School

and to their parents.

This policy should be read in conjunction with all other school policies, which are available on request from the school office. The Code of Behaviour is attached and must be read and signed as a pre requisite to enrolment.

2. Mission Statement

Abbey Vocational School is dedicated to the holistic development of students in a caring environment where tolerance and respect are nurtured and valued.

3. Operating Context

3.1 Relevant Legislation:

In the Operating Context, the Admission and Participation Policy is being set out in accordance with the provisions of

The Education Act 1998, The Education (Welfare) Act 2000, The Equal Status Act 2000, The EPSEN Act 2004, The Education & Training Board Act 2013

Subject to:

The context and parameters of the Department of Education & Skills Regulations and Programmes;

The rights of the Patron, i.e. E.T.B as set out in the Education Act;

The Mission Statement as set out above;

The funding and resources available.

The school supports the principles of:

Inclusiveness in enrolment policies

Equality of access and participation in the school

Parental choice in relation to enrolment

Respect for diversity of traditions, values, beliefs, languages and ways of life in society

The enrolment of students who have a disability or other special educational needs

3.2 Funding Bodies:

The financial, physical and teaching resources of the school are provided by

Grants received from the Department of Education & Skills via Donegal E.T.B.

The teacher allocations from the Department of Education & Skills

Additional facilities for school and community use

The implementation of the School Plan and School Policy, having due regard to resources and funding available

The school operates within the guidelines and regulations laid down from time to time by the Department of Education & Skills and Donegal Education and Training Board.

The school follows the curricular programmes detailed in the prospectus for the school year as prescribed by the Department of Education and Skills, which may be amended from time to time in accordance with Sections 9 and 30 of the Education Act 1998.

4 School Details

4.1 Type of School:

Multi-Denominational, Co-educational school

Under the trusteeship of Donegal E.T.B.

Grant aided, publicly funded

4.2 Management:

Under Donegal E.T.B., as patron of the school

Board of Management

Members of Board of Management:

Mr. Oliver Plunkett (Teacher Rep)

Ms. Caroline Mohan (Teacher Rep)

Mr. Matthew Shovlin (Parent Rep)

Mrs. Mary Coughlan (Parent Rep)

Mr. Gabriel O Donnell (E.T.B. Member)

Mrs. Bernie Mulhern (E.T.B. Member)

Ms. Joanne Irwin (E.T.B. Rep)

Mr. Geoffrey Browne (E.T.B. Rep)

Principal: Mrs. Geraldine Diver

Deputy Principal: Mr. Ronan Doherty

4.3 Organisations:

A Parents' Association and Student Council have been established.

4.4 Curriculum Provision

Programmes: - **Junior Cycle:**

Junior Certificate Programme

Senior Cycle:

Transition Year

Leaving Certificate Programme

Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP)

Leaving Certificate Applied Programme (LCA)

Special Needs are catered for by Learning Support and Resource teachers allocated by the Department of Education & Skills.

4.5 Extra-Curricular Activities / Parallel Curriculum:

These activities complement the formal curriculum in contributing to the all-round holistic development of students. Such activities offered in the school include: Drama/Music, Gaisce, GAA, Soccer, Volleyball, Basketball, Athletics, Swimming, Golf and Educational Tours. Participation in extra-curricular activities is promoted through intra and inter-school activities, lunch break e.g. soccer league and after school hours. All students are encouraged to participate in these programmes.

4.6 Other Relevant Information:

Full particulars of the school calendar for the current session including school opening hours, Parent/Teacher meetings will be provided at the beginning of each year.

The school may, at its discretion, request parents to pay annual levies towards extra-curricular activity expenses.

The school is committed to continued development of a School Book Rental/Loan Scheme.

5. Enrolment Procedures

The Board of Management has formally sanctioned the school Principal to oversee the enrolment of students to the school. His/her decisions may be appealed to the Board of Management.

Application/enrolment will be in accordance with the Education Act 1998, Education (Welfare) Act 2000 and Equal Status Act 2000.

The school, subject to the limitations in this policy, supports the principles of:

- Inclusiveness, particularly with reference to enrolment of children with a disability or other special educational needs
- Equality of access and participation in the school
- Parental choice in relation to enrolment

- Respect for diversity of values, beliefs, traditions, languages and ways of life in society
- Openness, accountability and transparency

Equality of access and participation is the key value that determines the enrolment of pupils in our school. No child is refused admission for reasons of ethnicity, special educational needs, disability, language/accent, gender, traveller status or religious/political beliefs and values.

5.1 Application/Enrolment for incoming first year student

Parents seeking to enrol a child are requested to return a completed Enrolment Form (available from school).

The enrolment period will begin immediately after the open evening (date of which will be circulated to all feeder primary schools and advertised locally) and will cease at 4:30pm on the date specified on the enrolment form.

5.2 Provision of key information by parents:

All applications must include the following information:

- Pupil's Name, Age, Date of Birth, Address, PPS Number, Copy of Pupil's Birth Cert;
- Parent/Guardian names and addresses, Mother's maiden name;
- Telephone contact numbers, SMS contact number;
- Emergency contact numbers, Email address;
- Details of medical conditions, including disabilities or special educational needs;
- Family doctor, Medical Card No;
- Other family members in attendance at school;
- Nationality;
- Previous School(s) attended;
- Reason for transfer, if applicable;
- Records, References, Disciplinary information.

Application Form must be completed in full.

5.3 Enrolment Criteria:

The following criteria will apply:

- Pupils from Primary Schools within the Abbey Vocational School catchment area
- Siblings and step-siblings resident at the same address of a current pupil
- In the matter of applications from students who are either refugees or asylum seekers, the Board of Management acts in accordance with the policy developed by the Education & Training Boards Ireland representing all of the Education & Training Boards

Procedure in The Event of Over-subscription:

If a situation arises where Abbey Vocational School receives more applications to enrol than it can cater for the following will apply and in the following order:

1. Pupils living in the catchment area and attending Primary schools in the catchment area
2. Pupils who have family members already enrolled in the school
3. Date of application received (if after the closing date)
4. Random Lottery overseen by two members of Board of Management

Decision-making process:

Decisions will be notified to parents within 21 days of receipt of the above information (**See Ref 5.2 Provision of key information by parents**) and any other further information, which may be required and will be prescribed under Section 19 of the Education Welfare Act 2000.

In making decisions on applications the Board will have regard to relevant Department of Education & Skills provisions in relation to

- Class size
- Staffing provisions
- Requirements concerning accommodation, such as physical space or the health and welfare of the children, e.g. to be a recognised pupil of this school a student must be 12 years of age by 31st December in the calendar year of the child's entry into first year. Birth Certificates are required for this purpose

Reservations by Board of Management:

While recognising the right of students and parents to enrol in the school, the Board of Management has a responsibility to respect the rights of the existing School Community and, in particular, the students already enrolled. This requires balanced judgments, which are guided by the principles of natural justice and acting in the best interests of all students.

5.4 Special Educational Needs:

The Board of Management and staff of the school will endeavour to:

- Identify children who may be applying for admission to the school who have special educational needs and to become familiar with their needs
- Request copies of the child's medical, psychological report/individual education programme
- Request immediate assessment, where necessary

Parents/Guardians of students with Special Educational Needs, whether educational, medical, psychological or social needs, should submit all relevant information suitably in advance of March of the year of enrolment, in order that the school may plan and acquire the necessary resources, both teaching and ancillary, to provide an appropriate programme of education for the child.

Application for the provision for Special Educational Needs to the National Council for Special Education and the Department of Education & Skills will be in writing and supported by the reports supplied by parents/guardians. Co-operation between the Parent/Guardian of students with special educational needs and the Board of Management / School is essential to ensure

that appropriate facilities are allocated and in place for September. In some instances it may be necessary for the Board of Management or the Principal, acting on its behalf, to defer enrolment of a particular child pending receipt of assessment, reports and/or the provision of the appropriate resources by the Department of Education & Skills, to meet the particular special educational needs of the student.

5.5 Transfers from other second level schools:

In the case of students seeking to transfer to the Abbey Vocational School from another Post-primary school, the following procedures apply:

- Parents who request a place for their son/daughter(s) must attend an interview with the Principal.
- Parents who request a place for their son/daughter(s) must complete an application form and provide key information outlined in **Ref 5.2 (*Provision of key information by parents*)**. The student applying may be interviewed by the Principal who may be accompanied by the Deputy Principal or a member of the teaching staff. The reason for the proposed transfer will be discussed with the parents/guardians and the student, as appropriate.
- All relevant data – (as per the Education Welfare Act, 2000) concerning the applicant will be sought by the Principal from the Principal of the school, which the applicant is attending or has most recently attended.
- Transfer to the school shall be on the basis that it would be in the best interests of the student concerned, given curricular provision, subject choices, and facilities available at the time and any other relevant factors affecting the educational benefits to the applicant and the likely impact on students already in the school.
- Having due regard to the statutory and constitutional rights of parents and their children, the Management of the Abbey Vocational School reserves the right to refuse any application in particular circumstances, which might include but is not exclusively confined to the following:
 1. An established prior record of poor behavior
 2. Lack of adequate resources to cater for particular needs
 3. Applications to transfer into the school will be considered having regard to the overall wellbeing of existing pupils and the availability of physical space and resources.Following consideration by the School Management of individual applications to transfer into the school, where there are good grounds for forming the fair and reasonable opinion that it would not be in the best interests of the existing students and/or the applicant to accept such a transfer, it is the policy of the school to refuse to enrol such applicants.

- Applications will not be accepted from students who are the subject of ongoing disciplinary proceedings in another school which includes any ongoing statutory procedures in accordance with the Education Act 1998 or The Education (Welfare) Act 2000.
- A decision about the transfer of the student to the school will be conveyed to the parent/guardian within 21 days of the receipt of all the required information by the Principal.

5.6 Code of Behaviour

The school's Code of Behaviour for the current session is attached. This code includes:

- Acceptable standards of behaviour
- Rewards systems
- Disciplinary measures that may be taken
- Procedures before suspension or expulsion

Each parent/guardian of a student applying for enrolment to the school will be required to sign an undertaking in relation to the Code of Behaviour as a condition for enrolment in the school.

5.7 Right of Appeal

Parents have the right to appeal a refusal by a school to enrol a student to the Education & Training Board and also under Section 29 of the Education Act 1998 as restated in Circular Letter M48/01 of the Department of Education & Skills.

6. The Abbey Vocational School Transition Year Admission Policy 2015

6.1 Transition Year:

Transition Year (TY) is an optional year offered in the Abbey Vocational School “*to promote the personal, social, educational and vocational development of pupils and to prepare them for their role as autonomous, participative and responsible members of society*” (Department of Education, 1994)

6.2 Aims and objectives of TY:

The purpose of TY is to *promote maturity* in our students who are admitted to and complete the TY programme here in the Abbey Vocational School.

We strive to promote maturity:

- *by encouraging more self-directed learning through the development of general, technical and academic skills*
- *in relation to work and careers by developing work-related skills*
- *in students own personal capacity by providing opportunities to develop communication skills, self-confidence and a sense of responsibility*
- *socially by developing an awareness of the world outside school*
- *enabling improved decision making in subject choice for Leaving Certificate*

6.3 Type of learning involved in TY:

Transition Year (TY) is implemented immediately after completion of the Junior Certificate Cycle and involves students committing to 1 year fulltime to complete. TY provides an important bridge to enable students to make the transition from the more *dependent type of learning associated with Junior Cycle* to the more *independent learning environment associated with Senior Cycle*. It encourages the development of a wide range of transferable critical thinking and creative problem solving skills. These are skills that students are increasingly relying on in both third level education and in professional work environments on a daily basis.

As an optional year TY students need to be suitable for the programme in order to benefit from and contribute to the shared learning experience involved in this year. The year involves a large amount of activities that involve students being active in their ‘own learning’ as individuals and as part of teams in group learning settings. Thus an adequate level of responsibility and maturity are required to yield maximum outputs for each student involved in this year.

6.4 Application & Admission policy procedures for students wishing to pursue the Transition Year Programme in the Abbey Vocational School:

- The TY programme is open to all students who have completed the 3rd year Junior Certificate Examinations.
- Priority will be given to 3rd year pupils of the Abbey Vocational School.
- Students will be allocated to the programme subject to resources.
- The Board of Management reserves the right to determine the maximum number of pupils accepted into the TY each year depending on the following criteria;
 - *Health & Safety Considerations*
 - *Availability of teacher resources from the Department of Education and Skills*
 - *Directives received from the Department of Education & Science*
 - *The ability of the Abbey Vocational School to successfully cater for the evolving needs of pupils*

The following are the application and admission procedures currently in place for students wishing to apply for a place in the TY programme in the Abbey Vocational School;

1. Students must complete and application form and return it to the school by the closing date outlined on the form
2. Late applications will be processed only after all applications submitted on time have been processed and finalised
3. All students who apply will be interviewed in order to assess their suitability for inclusion on the TY programme in the Abbey Vocational School
4. The students will be selected based on the following;
 - The information supplied on their application form
 - Their interview performance
 - The student's behaviour record
 - The student's attendance record
 - The evaluation of suitability from the student's teachers
 - The students motivation/interest in the TY programme
 - The students involvement in extracurricular school activities
 - The ability for the student to act as a school ambassador both within the school environment and externally at various events and competitions
5. Successful candidates will be notified if they are successful/unsuccessful by the school when the selection process is complete

6. In the event that the number of approved applicants exceeds the number of places available in a given academic year a lottery will be conducted amongst the approved candidates which will be overseen by the school Principal, the TY Co-ordinator & the Guidance Counsellor.
7. Any breach of the schools Code of Behaviour prior to and during the commencement of TY in the Abbey Vocational School may result in the withdrawal of the student's place on the programme.
8. If a student accepts a TY place and subsequently withdraws from the programme it should be noted that they will be processed for their 5th year subject options after other students who have applied first.
9. Students pursuing the TY option within the school may be subject to a levy payable upon acceptance of the offer to cover the diverse range of costs associated with running the TY programme here in the Abbey Vocational School.
10. This policy will be reviewed and revised annually.

*These admission procedures and policies are subject to continuous reviewing and change as deemed necessary by the Abbey Vocational School Staff.

Declaration of Interest

I _____ wish to be considered for a place on the Transition Year Programme in the Abbey Vocational School commencing in September 2015.

Signed: _____ Date: _____
 Parent/Guardian

Signed: _____ Date: _____
 Student

7 Policy and Procedures for Enrolment of students in Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) Support Class

7.1 The Abbey Vocational School ASD class aims to offer an autism specific learning environment within a mainstream co-educational second level school. The Abbey Vocational School's ASD support class will strive to maximise the learning skills, social skills, self-worth and sense of independence of its pupils. Training in the basic skills of communication, self-care and key social competences form an integral part of the school community.

The location in a second level school is appropriate as it facilitates inclusion in the school community and provides access to mainstream activities as appropriate.

It is noted that individual students on the ASD Spectrum may be more suitable to a full-time mainstream setting; a diagnosis of Autism or Asperger's will not automatically qualify a student for a place in the unit.

In addition, best practice indicates that the needs of a student incapable of any level of inclusion are best met in a Special School placement.

The ASD support class in the Abbey Vocational School will open in September 2015. A purpose built extension will be constructed and Room 10 will be used in the interim. It is envisaged that students will use the room on a daily basis and will enter mainstream classes where possible.

7.2 Eligibility

The following documentation must be presented to be considered for a place in the ASD support class:

- A completed enrolment form.
- An Educational/Clinical Psychologist's Report recommending the candidate is suitable for a placement in an Autism Spectrum Disorder support classroom. The classroom will cater for children with mild general learning difficulties or moderate learning difficulties. The classroom is not in a position to accommodate children with severe or profound learning difficulties.
- A report from the student's primary school outlining the student's academic, social, emotional and behavioural needs and outlining the current extent of social integration.
- Any other relevant reports e.g. Speech and Language Therapy or Occupational Therapy
- A signed consent form from parents/guardians granting the school permission to access any relevant reports from previous schools attended.

7.3 Enrolment Procedure

- All vacancies in the ASD support class will be filled, according to the chronological order of applications, from the date of receipt of the completed enrolment form and reports, subject to the above conditions being met.
- Where there are more applicants than places, national schools in the local catchment area will have priority. Those students who have siblings currently enrolled in the Abbey Vocational School will also have priority.
- Students who meet the criteria for enrolment but are not offered a place for September will remain on the waiting list in the event that a vacancy should arise during the school year.
- Students must be suitable for inclusion in some mainstream classes or activities with their peer group.

7.4 Decisions on Enrolment

Enrolment may be refused to the Abbey Vocational School's ASD support classroom if:

- Students are deemed a risk to themselves or others.
- Enrolment would have a detrimental effect on the education of other students.
- The student's needs are such that, even with additional resources available from the Department of Education and Skills and the H.S.E., the school cannot meet such needs and/or provide the student with an appropriate education.
- All enrolments are subject to the approval of the Board of Management.
- Should the Board of Management refuse enrolment, parents will be advised of their right to appeal and will be given information on how to do so.

7.5 Discharge Process

- There will be an annual review of the student's placement within the ASD support class to ensure that the class continues to be the most suitable placement option available to the student.
- As a student enrolled in the ASD support class approaches 18 years of age we will endeavour to put in place a transition programme will be put in place to facilitate the student's move to further education or training. A student's chronological age will be considered in assessing the appropriateness of their continued participation in the ASD class.

7.6 General Information

- Potential students may be visited by a member of the ASD team to observe the student in their existing placement, to liaise with the class teacher and to make preparations for their transition to the Abbey Vocational School.
- Potential students' parents will also be met by the ASD team to assist with the transition process.
- There will be an annual review of the student's placement within the ASD support class to ensure that the class continues to be the most suitable placement option available to the student.
- As a student who is enrolled in the ASD support classroom approaches 18 years of age a transition programme will be put in place to facilitate the student's move to further education or training. A student's chronological age will be considered in assessing the appropriateness of their continued participation in the ASD classroom.
- It is important to note that individual students on the ASD spectrum who access the ASD support room will have their own unique timetable.
- Some students on the ASD spectrum may be more suited to mainstream and may not need to access the services of the ASD support classroom.
- Services such as Speech and Language Therapy and Occupational Therapy are provided by the Health Executive Service. Parents/Guardians please note that the Abbey Vocational School has no control over these services.

8. LEAVING CERTIFICATE APPLIED (L.C.A.)

All students who complete the Junior Certificate are offered an opportunity to enrol in our LCA Programme. All Transition Year/Third Year students are briefed by the Guidance Counsellor on the post Junior Certificate programmes available. The students are then given an opportunity to indicate their interest in LCA when returning their fifth year option forms.

The LCA Co-ordinator, relevant Year Head, SEN Co-Coordinator and Guidance Counselor identify students whom they deem to be suited to the LCA programme and encourage them to apply based on the following criteria:

- Attendance (in cases where there is poor attendance and the student is in danger of dropping out)
- Career choice
- Junior Certificate results
- Behaviour - in cases where students find it difficult to engage in learning
- Advice from Teachers, Parents and Guidance Counselor

As part of the selection process all students must undergo an interview. Selection is based on the suitability of the student for this educational programme in line with the criteria set out above. This is assessed on a case by case basis and the decision to award a place in LCA is made in consultation with Student, Parents, LCA Co-Coordinator, Relevant Year Head, S.E.N. Department (where relevant) Principal and Deputy Principal.

The LCA Co-ordinator meets the students individually to discuss the programme. The LCA Co-ordinator invites students interested in the programme along with their parents for further presentations.

9. REPEAT LEAVING CERTIFICATE STUDENTS

- Students will complete an Application Form
- Applicants will be interviewed by the Principal/Deputy/Assistant Principal to assess suitability
- Places will be awarded to those from the Abbey Vocational School prior to a student from another school.
- Students will be placed in classes on a first come first served basis. Application forms will be dated
- Students who wish to repeat must attend on a full time basis