Sonas

Special Junior Primary School
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Roll No. 20162O

Admission Policy of Sonas Special Junior Primary School 2027 2028

School Address: Ardnacloghy, Carrigaline, Co Cork P43 EF95
Roll number: 20162O
School Patron: Brothers of Charity

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 and 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 Sonas Special Junior Primary School admission process will be set out in the school's annual admission notice in line with the Education (Admission to Schools) Act 2018. This will be published on the school's website on September 24th 2026 one week before the commencement of the admission process for the 2027/2028 year in line with the legislation. The admissions process will commence on October 1st 2026 for the 2027/2028 year.

This policy must be read in conjunction with the annual Admission Notice for the 2027/2028 school year.

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

Sonas Special Junior Primary School is a co-educational special school for children with autism and co-occurring needs aged 3-6 . The school subscribes fully to the Ethos Statement of our patron, the Congregation of the Brothers of Charity.

All pupils are equally valued and respected irrespective of gender, social or ethnic background, family circumstances, educational achievement or religious persuasion. The school recognizes the uniqueness of each child and acknowledges that he/she will present with a distinct set of talents. The school will endeavour to use the pupils' areas of strength to promote learning in areas of identified need. The school's ethos, structure, curricula, activities and resources reflect the belief that the holistic development of each pupil is of paramount importance be it intellectual, aesthetic, spiritual, moral, physical or social development.

The characteristic spirit and general objectives of Sonas Special Junior Primary School are such that the school aims to:

Create a happy, caring, stimulating, safe and secure learning environment that considers the need for structure and, predictability that autistic children may need to promote understanding and felt safety.

Help ensure that every pupil reaches his/her full potential academically, socially, creatively, emotionally and communicatively.

Promote tolerance and acceptance of others within their classroom and school community.

Support co-operation and relational safety in the classroom through engagement with NCSE Relate framework that promotes a Regulation First approach in understanding and supporting behaviour.

Help the pupils develop a positive sense of self and foster the incremental growth of their self-esteem as they progress in school.

Help pupils to thrive in their environment and create opportunities to promote learning and development.

Support pupils to develop self-advocacy through their preferred communication styles.

3. Admission Statement

Sonas Special Junior Primary 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

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.

Sonas is a school which, with the approval of the Minister for Education and Skills, provides an education exclusively for students aged 3-6 years old with Autism and Complex needs specified by the Minister and may refuse admission to a student, where the student does not meet the specified category of Special Educational Needs provided for by the school.

Sonas Special Junior Primary School 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 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.

Sonas Special Junior Primary School will comply with any direction served on the patron or the board under section 37A and any direction served on the board under section 67 (4B) of the Education Act.

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

Sonas Special Junior Primary School, with the approval of the Minister for Education and Skills, provides an education exclusively for students aged 3-6 years old with a diagnosis of Autism and Complex Needs. New students applying for a place in the school must be aged 3 but not have reached their 5th birthday by September 1st in the year of proposed admission.

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 co-operation with such code by the student.

c) the student does not have the category of special educational needs catered for by the school

Sonas Special Junior Primary School, with the approval of the Minister for Education and Skills, provides an education exclusively for students aged 3-6 years old with a diagnosis of ASD and whose learning abilities lie within the moderate, mild and average ranges. New students applying for a place in the school must be aged 3 but not have reached their 5th birthday by September 1st in the year of proposed admission.

- Sonas Board of Management takes ultimate responsibility for admissions in the school.

- To apply for a place in Sonas, Parents/Guardians are required to send a completed Pupil Placement Application Form accompanied by a diagnostic assessment report to the school Principal indicating a request for a school place. This diagnosis of autism must have been secured from a publicly funded Multidisciplinary Team in accordance with international best practice guidelines or from a privately funded diagnostic assessment of Autism approved by a publicly funded team. The team must always include psychology/psychiatry which has conducted the team assessment in conjunction with other disciplines which may include psychology/psychiatry, speech and language therapy or occupational therapy.

- The assessment report must outline:

1. Diagnosis of Autism: DSM IV/V or ICD 10/11
2. A demonstration of the understanding of complexity of the child's overall level of need/s evidenced in the reports include a recommendation for an Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) specific school environment.
3. Given the severity of the child's support needs, a clear professional recommendation as to what educational placement type would be the most appropriate to best meet the child's needs along with the rationale for same.

- A letter of eligibility from the NCSE confirming that the child is known to them and that the child has the required diagnosis and recommendation for a place in Sonas.

- All relevant documents are forwarded to the school such as current preschool/home tuition reports and up to date psychological/SLT/OT/psychiatric reports.

- Applications from a third party will not be considered

- The Board of Management has set up an Admissions Committee comprising of the Principal, Deputy Principal and AP2 Post Holders. The Admissions Committee meets in November 2026 to review all applications
.
- Places will be offered as per the Admissions Notice on November 27th 2026 prior to the 2027/2028 year of admission.

- When parents have accepted the offer of a place in Sonas Special Junior Primary School, they will be invited to information sessions for all new parents in the third term of the school year. New Parents will be given an Information Pack as well as relevant forms which must be filled in and returned to the school – these include the POD form, Transport Form, Enrolment Form and Application for Access to Additional SNA support where relevant.

- Arrangements will be made for new pupils to visit Sonas in the third term to support a positive transition to school in Sonas.

- Contact will be made with previous placements or home tutors to gain information about the child with the consent of parents. Any other reports from educational settings or home tutors are requested to be made available to Sonas before May 1st prior to the September in which the child commences school.

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:

Details of students who meet the criteria for enrolment but are not offered a place for September are kept in the school in the event of a vacancy becoming available during the year.

If 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:

In the event that two or more applications and reports tie for a place or places the following selection criteria apply:

Selection Criteria One:

An eligible student's connection to the school by virtue of a sibling of the child attending or have attended the school.

Selection Criteria Two:

Preference will be given to the youngest child.

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, pre-school service or early intervention class

(b) the payment of fees or contributions (howsoever described) to the school;

(c) a student's academic ability, skills or aptitude; other than the admission criteria approved by the Minister for Education i.e that the children starting school in Sonas for the first time has a diagnosis of Autism and Complex Needs and has not reached their 5th birthday by September 1st in their first year of admission to the school.

(d) a requirement that parents, attend transition days held in the last term open day or other meetings as a condition of admission;

(e) a student's connection to the school by virtue of a member of his or her family (other than sibling) attending or having previously attended the school;

(f) 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 Sonas Special Junior Primary School will be based on the following:

- Our school's Admission Policy
- The school's annual Admission Notice
- The clinical evidence that the student has received a diagnosis of Autism secured from a publicly funded Multi-Disciplinary Team in accordance with international best practice guidelines or from a privately funded diagnostic assessment of Autism approved by a publicly funded team.
- 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 15 below in relation to applications received outside of the admissions period and section 16 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. Offers will be made on November 27th 2026 and should be accepted in writing by 11th December 2026. Unsuccessful applicants will be notified by 13th December when offers have been accepted in writing.

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) within 3 weeks of being informed that their application was unsuccessful.

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

In accepting an offer of admission from Sonas Special Junior Primary 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 Sonas Special Junior Primary 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
(v) the child does not meet the age criteria i.e. they are aged 3 but not have reached their 5th birthday by September 1st in the year of proposed admission.
(vi) the child is found not to have the category of special educational needs catered for by the school

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 to facilitate the efficient admission of students. Where it is applicable, Sonas Special Junior Primary School will be requesting information from a student's previous educational placement regarding current level of functioning, sensory needs, level of support required and any behavioural issues that might impact on class management.

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 Sonas Special Junior Primary 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 Sonas Special Junior Primary 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.

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. Applicants who will have reached the age of 5 years before September 1st of the proposed year of admission will not be eligible to reapply.

When the places for the following school year have been filled, the Principal will inform the SENO and District Inspector of those children who remain on the Waiting List but who do not have a place in the school. The Principal will notify the SENO of definite vacancies in the school for the following year in accordance with NCSE guidelines. The SENO will also be informed of names of children on the Waiting 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, after the commencement of the school year in which admission is sought, are as follows:
If parents decide to leave the school during the school year and avail of a place in another school, they are required to inform the Principal immediately in writing. This will enable the Admissions Committee to offer the place to another child.
Sonas Special Junior Primary Vacancies may be filled as they arise during the school year following a recommendation from the Admissions Committee.
The SENO and District Inspector will be informed of these admissions during the school year.

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

This rule applies to all schools.

The Board of Sonas Special Junior Primary 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. Reviews/appeals

Review of decisions by the Board of Management

The parent of the student may request the board to review a decision to refuse admission within 3 weeks of receipt of a refusal of a place in the school. 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 within 3 weeks of receiving a refusal 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.

Occasionally concerns regarding the suitability of a child's placement arise. A review of a school's ability to meet the child's needs in a way that ensures that the child develops to his/her potential may be necessary. Parents will be kept fully informed of any concerns that might arise at the earliest opportunity. Parents may be asked to work in partnership with the school to consider all options open to the child, up to and including a review of the child's placement.

Right of appeal

Under Section 29 of the Education Act 1998, the parent 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.

Reviewed and ratified by the Sonas BOM September 2026