

Education (Admission to Schools) Act 2018

- Rationale: Transparency and Consistency in school enrolment

Changes to admissions procedures in our schools

- Draft policy must be presented to SET by April 30 **following** consultation with SET and either approved by us or approved by us subject to modifications. Final approval must be given by 15 September 2020 for implementation 2021.
- Long waiting lists are gone- applications cannot be accepted before October of the year preceding the student's entry to 1st Year. Boarding schools can accept applications 2 years before the student enters 1st Year.
- Admissions Notice. All schools must publish and make available an Annual Admissions Notice which will set out the timeline for application, number of places available and other statistics in relation to student numbers.

Key sections of Admission Policy

- Characteristic Spirit and general objectives of the school. Section 15 (2) (b) –The BoM is accountable to the patron for upholding Characteristic Spirit.
- Selection Criteria.
- Admission Procedures.
- Opting out of Religion.

Tasks for SET and BoM's.

- Spiritan Schools remain open to all.
- Religious Instruction continues to support our characteristic spirit in our schools.
- Junior Cycle programme of R.E. is of the highest quality, delivered by qualified and committed teachers.
- High quality Non- Exam RE programme - prescribed programme
- Ongoing training and upskilling of our teachers should be facilitated and supported by BoM/SET.
- The Junior Cycle programme within Spiritan Schools should contain Religious Instruction, **notwithstanding the fact that in the subject inspections, the Department Inspectorate will criticise our schools for doing so.**
- Principals are advised and supported in their efforts to convince parents and students over 18 of the merits of remaining in Religious Instruction classes.

Points for us to Consider

- Where do students who opt out of R.I. go? What are the Human Resource implications?
- How will schools process applications according to stated criteria within 3 weeks? Unrealistic, where schools will receive 100's of applications for fewer than 150 places. Resource Implications
- Section 66- Sharing of information with other schools. GDPR implications?
- It is reasonable to expect that a considerable number of appeals will land in schools. Time consuming and resource issues.

Points for us to consider.

- **Prove** that admitting a student could undermine the ethos of the school. Section 62 (7) ©
- According to the Act, the purpose of a Principal meeting with a parent/student re the student opting out of RI is to agree how the school may **accommodate** the student. No mention of any effort to dissuade. If a student wished to move from Higher to Ord. Level maths there would be a discussion and in many cases an effort to encourage student to remain at H.L.
- Given the challenges we face re our Junior schools should we consider a campus- wide Admissions Policy?

Points for us to Consider

- The practice of some of our schools of refusing entry to a student with special need because of a lack of resources will have to stop. No parent can be questioned about any special needs his/her child may have.
- Schools may not make a parents attendance at a meeting a condition of entry for a student. A pity as such meetings afford an opportunity to build positive school-parent relationships.
- Students on waiting lists to start **after** 26/27 will not receive any special accommodation. Legal challenge?

Points for us to consider

- An application fee will no longer be permitted- a big financial problem for a non-fee-paying school.
- The distinction that we correctly see between Religious Education and Religious Instruction is not acknowledged by all. Irish Times 28/01/2020.
- How will major events be celebrated in school if significant numbers of students have withdrawn from R.I.- Celebration of the Eucharist, Prayer Services etc. (P.V. While respecting the rights of students to withdraw from such events, perhaps we must also insist on our rights to express our beliefs through liturgy. One could organise such events in such a way that those who do not wish to attend can be present for a portion of the event.)

Points for us to consider

- How will schools respond if significant numbers of students develop a conscientious objection to R.I. in the final months before the LC? I have not seen any reference to this in the Act.
- Worth noting that the right to withdraw from R.I has been with us for many years and the floodgates did not open. Problem now is that a Catholic school will be required by legislation to publish clearly how we are going to accommodate those who wish to opt out. We are calling attention to this right and almost promoting it.

Where are we now?

- All schools (including Junior Schools to whom the legislation does not apply) have been informed of the requirement to consult with SET **before** preparing a draft Admissions Policy. Consultation must also take place with parents and staff.
- A meeting of Principals and BoM reps is being arranged for a sharing of views and concerns.
- The Education Committee has met about this issue and The Ethos Committee met this evening.
- Ronan and Tom will meet with other trusts on the 4th of March to again share ideas.

Desired Outcomes.

- We need to ensure that Religious Instruction continues to be available to our students.
- We must work with our schools to produce a policy which will meet the requirements of the legislation but also allow us to protect our characteristic spirit. Section 62 requires us to state the characteristic spirit of the school.
- We need to consider how our Junior Schools might respond to this legislation.