



## **POLICY FOR ADMISSION TO CARA COMMUNITY SPECIAL SCHOOL**

A decision on an application for admission will be based on the implementation of this Policy, the information set out in the annual Admission Notice of the school and the information provided by the Applicant in the application for admission, once received before the closing date set out in the annual admission notice. The Principal of Cara Community Special School is responsible for the implementation of this Admission Policy.

## INTRODUCTION TO CARA COMMUNITY SPECIAL SCHOOL

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Cara Community Special School is a Community National School which was established in 2024 by Louth and Meath Education and Training Board (LMETB).

Cara Community Special School, Enfield, Co. Meath is a Community Special School that provides an appropriate education for students, aged 4 to 18 years old, who have a diagnosis of Autism **and** complex learning needs, with a professional recommendation for a Special School. The student must have reached 4 years on or before 31st August of the school academic year for which they seek enrolment. To facilitate this age band, the range of classes extend from primary to post primary and are based on relevant and appropriate peer groupings and the individual needs of each child. As per DE regulations, students will leave school at the end of the school year in which they reach the age of 18 years old.

The school operates within the regulations as outlined by the Rules for National Schools and relevant circulars and directives issued by the Primary/Special Education sections of the Department of Education. The school is funded by grants from the Department of Education. Staffing allocations are in line with those set out by the Department of Education. The Board of Management is made up of representatives of the Patron, parents, school staff and the community.

Cara Community Special School is a state, co-educational, multidenominational special school underpinned by the core values of excellence in education, care, equality, community and respect. Cara Community Special School gives equal opportunities to all children in the community it serves and strives to provide high quality education through respectful, positive, supportive and responsive learning environments.

Cara Community Special School is a place where everyone feels a sense of belonging, is actively engaged and is valued for who they are. We nurture a strong sense of community by offering a warm welcome and celebrating together, always guided by empathy, dignity, and respect for our shared humanity. We create an inclusive and safe learning environment where every learner is given the space and choice to grow. Building meaningful, trusting relationships with students, their families, and all those involved in their care and education is at the heart of ensuring a rich and high-quality learning experience for every young person

Cara Community Special School delivers the state curriculum—including the Primary Curriculum, Junior Cycle, and Senior Cycle—guided by the Guidelines for Students with General Learning Disabilities. Where appropriate, the school offers programmes that lead to recognised awards. These Department of Education and Youth prescribed programmes are and teaching methods and strategies to support and enhance their learning.

In close collaboration with each child’s multidisciplinary team, our teachers and staff create a supportive yet appropriately challenging learning environment that promotes personal, social, and academic growth, while also encouraging independence. Every student has a personalised Individual Education Plan (IEP), tailored specifically to support their unique strengths and needs.

## **INTRODUCTION TO THE PATRON – LOUTH AND MEATH EDUCATION AND TRAINING BOARD**

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The patron of Cara Community Special School, Enfield, Co. Meath is Louth and Meath Education and Training Board (LMETB). Louth and Meath Education and Training Board (LMETB) is the largest comprehensive educational provider in the Louth and Meath region with a range of educational services from primary to post primary and further education and training.

Louth and Meath Education and Training Board is committed to excellence and innovation in the education of young people and adults through the provision of dynamic services delivered by professional staff.

LMETB manages four Community National Schools, one Community Special School, a Centre for European Schooling, eighteen post primary schools including one school with Post Leaving Certificate provision and two dedicated Post Leaving Certificate colleges. LMETB is also joint patron of six Community Schools located in Ardee, Ashbourne, Athboy, Drogheda, Kells and Trim.

Each LMETB school and college has proven itself as a centre of excellence in teaching, learning and assessment in its local community. LMETB schools provide a welcoming atmosphere for students, staff, parents and the local communities in which they operate. The LMETB

school/college experience is one where a warm relationship exists between teachers and learners and the atmosphere in lessons is positive and conducive to learning. A broad and balanced curriculum with a diverse range of co-curricular and extracurricular activities where the aptitudes of students are central to its design is available in LMETB schools. Each of these schools has built a very positive reputation in the local communities in which they operate, and each school continues to enjoy strong parental support and a high level of satisfaction with the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.

At Further Education and Training level, LMETB manages Youthreach Centres, a Regional Skills and Training Centre, the Advanced Manufacturing Training Centre of Excellence (AMTCE), Drogheda College and an extensive range of Adult Education Services throughout counties Louth and Meath, including Adult Learning Services, Community Education, Back to Education Initiatives (BTEI), VTOS and Adult Guidance. Details of all LMETB schools and centres are included on our website [www.lmetb.ie](http://www.lmetb.ie) .

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# **PART A**

## ***General Information for All Applicants***

- 1. Glossary of Terms***
- 2. Admission Statement***
- 3. Legal Framework***
- 4. General Admission Provisions (for all Applicants)***

## 1. GLOSSARY OF TERMS

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**‘Applicant’** means the parent / guardian of a student who has made an application for admission to Cara Community Special School.

**‘Louth and Meath Education & Training Board (LMETB)’** is the patron of the school and was established under the Education & Training Boards Act 2013.

**‘Board of Management’** refers to the committee of LMETB set up to perform the functions of a Board of Management under section 15 of the Education Act 1998, including preparing an Admissions Policy for the school, with the approval of the school’s patron.

**‘Student’** means the person in respect of whom the application is being made. All uses of the word ‘Student’ throughout this Policy therefore imply ‘prospective’ as part of the interpretation. That is, the use of the word ‘Student’ does not mean that an application or acceptance of offer makes him/her a student of Cara Community Special School; a person is only regarded as a Student of Cara Community Special School once s/he is enrolled on his/her first day of attendance. It does not include a person who was formerly enrolled in the school and was permanently excluded from the school or who left the school after being recommended for expulsion by the Board of Management.

**‘Enrolled’** means attending the school as a registered student, in line with section 20(2) of the Education (Welfare) Act 2000.

**‘Gender’**, in line with the definition of “*the gender ground*” in the Equal Status Act 2000, is such that “*one is male and the other is female*”. This does not prejudice any Student who is Intersex or identifies as Androgynous/Androgyne, Bigender, Demigender, Gender Fluid, Genderqueer, Multigender, Neutrois, Non-binary, Transgender, Transsexual or otherwise.

**‘Catchment Area’** refers to the designated residential area (determined by the Board of Management of Cara Community Special School) in respect of the person on whose behalf the application is being made. The catchment area for Cara Community Special School, Enfield, Co. Meath is defined as County Meath.

**‘Parent’** has the same meaning as in the Education Act 1998 and includes a foster parent and a guardian appointed under the Guardianship of Students Acts, 1964 to 1997.

**‘Relevant Report’**, as advised by the Department of Education and the National Council for Special Education (NCSE), means a written report based on an assessment by a relevant professional, which:

- (a) provides detailed evidence of the students’ needs,
- (b) confirms that those needs constitute complex/severe educational needs which arise from a named diagnosis relating to the student, and
- (c) makes a recommendation exclusively for a Special School or for a Special School and/or Special Class, but not solely for a Special Class placement for the student on the basis of his/her complex/severe educational needs arising from said diagnosis.

The relevant professionals may include an educational psychologist, psychologist, other relevant health professionals, HSE disability services or HSE multi-disciplinary team staff, in line with guidance issued by the NCSE on this point.



## 2. ADMISSION STATEMENT

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ETB schools are state, multidenominational, co-educational schools underpinned by the core values of:

- Excellence in Education.
- Care.
- Equality.
- Community and
- Respect.



As the State provider of education, the ETB sector defines a ‘multidenominational’ school in the following way:

In ETB schools, all students are given equal opportunities for enrolment in line with the Education (Admissions to School) Act 2018. Once enrolled, our schools strive to provide all students with equal opportunities to engage with the curriculum and school life. In all aspects of school life all members of our school communities are treated equitably regardless of their race, gender, religion/belief, age, family status, civil status, membership of the Traveller community, sexual orientation, ability or socio-economic status.

Our schools provide a safe physical and social environment that reinforces a sense of belonging to the school community and wider society. They strive to enable every student to realise their full potential regardless of any aspect of their identity or background. Our schools promote a fully inclusive education that recognises the plurality of identities, beliefs and values held by students, parents and staff.

In ETB schools, students of all religions and beliefs are treated equally. The school environment and activities do not privilege any particular group over another whilst at the same time acknowledging and facilitating students of all religions and beliefs.

Accordingly, Cara Community Special School shall not discriminate in its admission of a Student based on the following grounds:

- 2.1. Gender of the Student or Applicant.
- 2.2. Civil status of the Applicant.
- 2.3. Family status of the Student or Applicant.
- 2.4. Sexual orientation of the Student or Applicant.
- 2.5. Religion of the Student or Applicant.
- 2.6. Disability of the Student or Applicant.
- 2.7. Race of the Student or Applicant.
- 2.8. The Student's or Applicant's membership of the Traveller community.
- 2.9. Special educational needs of the Student or Applicant. However, where the school provides education exclusively for a category or categories of special educational need(s) in a Special Class, it is not discriminatory to refuse to admit to that class a student who does not have the specified special educational need(s).

Cara Community Special School shall not charge fees or payments or seek contributions as a condition of admission or continued enrolment of a Student.

### **3. LEGAL FRAMEWORK**

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Louth and Meath Education and Training Board was established under the Education and Training Board Act 2013 which sets out the functions of all ETBs, including to establish and maintain recognised schools, centres for education and education and training facilities in each ETB's functional area.

The board of management of Cara Community Special School is a committee established under section 44 of the Education and Training Board Act 2013 and constitutes a board of management within the meaning of the Education Act 1998.

The Education (Admission to Schools) Act 2018 and the Education (Welfare) Act 2000 place a duty on all recognised schools to prepare and publish an Admission Policy. The Education Act 1998 also provides for an appeal process in the event of a refusal to admit a student. The appeal process is set out in section 6 of this policy in respect of applications.

Section 62(7)(n) of the Education Act 1998 requires each school to set out in its Admission Policy the arrangements it has in place where a parent requests their Student to opt-out of religious instruction. Where Community Special Schools do not provide religious instruction within the school day, the need for alternative arrangements does not arise.

Religious instruction is a term used in Ireland to indicate instruction in accordance with the rites, practices and teachings of a particular religion or denomination for pupils of that religious tradition. Community Special Schools deliver a 'multi-belief and values education' curriculum called 'Goodness Me! Goodness You!' (GMGY), for primary-aged Students and post-primary-aged Students (where appropriate), and Identity, Multi-Belief and Values Education (IMBVE) for post-primary aged Students (where appropriate). These curricula are designed to cater for Students of all religions and beliefs attending the school.

Cara Community Special School will cooperate with the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) 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 Students with special educational needs. It 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. GENERAL ADMISSION PROVISIONS

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A decision on an application for admission shall be based on:

- the implementation of this Admission Policy,
- the annual Admission Notice of the school, and the
- information provided by the Applicant in the application for admission.

In processing an application Cara Community Special School **shall not consider**:

- 4.1 The payment of fees or contributions to the school.
- 4.2 A Student's academic ability, skills or aptitude; unless:
  - it is necessary to ascertain whether the student has the category of special educational needs concerned for admission to a school approved by the Minister of Education and Youth providing education exclusively to Students with a specified category of special educational needs or a Special Class.
- 4.3 The occupation, financial status, academic ability, skills or aptitude of a Student's Parent(s).
- 4.4 A Student's prior attendance at a pre-school or pre-school service, other than in relation to a student's prior attendance at an early intervention class or an early start pre-school, which classes and schools are specified in a list published by the Minister.
- 4.5 A requirement that a student or his or her Parent(s), attend an interview, open day or other meetings as a condition of admission.
- 4.6 A Student's connection to the school due to a member of his or her family attending the school
- 4.7 The date and time on which an application for admission was received by the school as long as it is received during the period specified for receiving applications set out in the annual admissions notice for that academic year.

**Cara Community Special School will consider** the offer of a place to every Student seeking admission to the school, **unless the following applies:**

- 4.8 The Parent fails to confirm in writing that s/he accepts the Student Code of Behaviour and shall make all reasonable efforts to ensure compliance with such code by the student if the student becomes a Student in the school.
- 4.9 The student seeking admission to the school does not have the category of special educational needs specified by the Minister of Education and Youth in respect of the school.

Where Cara Community Special School considers an application, each Student shall receive a place, unless the school is oversubscribed, in which case, selection criteria will be applied to each application.

Section 5 of this Policy addresses the selection criteria and other matters related to the admission provisions for each class group.

# **PART B**

## ***Information for Specific Categories of Applicants***

- 5. Application to the Class Groups***
- 6. Appeals***

# SECTION 5

## APPLICATION TO EACH OF THE CLASS GROUPS

### **5. APPLICATION TO EACH OF THE CLASS GROUPS**

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- 5.1. Oversubscription
- 5.2. Selection criteria in order of priority
- 5.3. Selection process
- 5.4. Late Applications
- 5.5. Second/third-round offers of a place
- 5.6. Acceptance of a place
- 5.7. Refusal
- 5.8. Withdrawal of an offer

TEMPLATE



## 5. ADMISSION PROVISIONS

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Cara Community Special School is established to provide education to Students with severe/complex educational needs arising from Autism/Autistic Spectrum Disorders.

Only applications in respect of Students whose needs fall within the category of special educational needs provided for in the Special School will be considered. In this respect, the school requires that such severe/complex educational needs and the related diagnosis of the student be evidenced and verified in a Relevant Report, the mandatory elements of which are set out in the Glossary of Terms section. **The school also requires documentation from the NCSE (National Council for Special Education) confirming that the child is known to the NCSE and has the required diagnosis and recommendation for a special school for the 2026/2027 Academic Year , in addition to a Relevant Report.**

In the event that Cara Community Special School is not oversubscribed, all students whose needs fall within the category of special educational needs provided for by the school and who submit the requisite Relevant Report together with documentation from the NCSE, will be offered a place in the school, subject to section 4.8 of this policy.

An application is only deemed to be complete when all documentation relevant to the application, as required by the school in accordance with this policy, has been received.

**Incomplete applications received by the school will not be processed under this policy.** If the school receives an application that is incomplete, it shall notify the Applicant that it is incomplete within three weeks of the application period having closed, or, in the case of a late application, within three weeks of the school receiving the incomplete application.

### 5.1 **Oversubscription**

When the number of applications exceeds the number of places available, the published selection criteria as set out at section 5.2 below will apply and a waiting list shall be compiled which shall remain valid only for the school year in respect of which the applications are made. Where Cara Community Special School is in a position to offer further school places that become available for and during that academic year, places will

be offered in accordance with the order of priority in which Students have been placed on the waiting list.

For the avoidance of doubt, if a Student does not receive a place in the school for a given academic year, but s/he wishes to be considered for admission in the following academic year, a new application must be made on behalf of that Student during the dates specified by the school in the applicable Admission Notice as being the period when it will accept applications for the relevant group to which the subsequent application is being made.

Where the school is oversubscribed, any selection criteria that are not included in this Admission Policy shall not be considered in determining whether or not a Student is admitted to the school.

## **5.2 Selection criteria in order of priority**

Application to Cara Community Special School will only be considered if the student's needs fall within the specified category of special educational needs provided for by the school. Subject to this requirement, in the event of oversubscription, the following criteria for admission to the various Groups as set out below will apply:

### **Selection criteria in order of priority**

#### **5.2.1 Students who:**

- Have an exclusive recommendation in their Relevant Report for a placement in a special school, **and**
- Have documentation from the NCSE (National Council for Special Education) confirming that the child is known to the NCSE and has the required diagnosis and recommendation for a special school for the 2026/2027 Academic Year **and**
- Reside in the Catchment Area, **and**
- Will be at least 4 years of age in September 2026

#### **5.2.2 Students who:**

- Have an exclusive recommendation in their Relevant Report for a placement in a special school, **and**
- Have documentation from the NCSE (National Council for Special Education) confirming that the child is known to the NCSE and has the required diagnosis and recommendation for a special school for the 2026/2027 Academic Year **and**

- Reside outside the Catchment Area, **and**
- Will be at least 4 years of age in September 2026

### **5.2.3 All other qualifying applications**

## **5.3      Selection process**

Cara Community Special School will apply the selection process as follows:

Having met the criteria for admission to Cara Community Special School, applications are considered against the published selection criteria. Places will be offered in the first instance to those who meet the first criterion. Subsequently, where the school still has places available, the remaining Applicants are considered in light of the second criterion and those Applicants who meet this criterion will be offered a place within the school. This process is continuously carried out against all selection criteria until all available places have been offered and accepted.

Where two or more applications are tied in the foregoing selection process, the school will apply a random lottery to assign any available places in the school, or on the waiting list, to those applications.

## **5.4      Late applications**

An application received by Cara Community Special School after the closing date published by the school, and set out in the Admission Notice, is considered a late application for the purposes of this Admission Policy.

Where the school is oversubscribed and receives a late application for admission, that application will receive a place on the waiting list beneath Applicants whose applications were received by the school before the closing date for applications, irrespective of any selection criteria which may be applied to applications received before the closing date for applications. Such late applications will be placed on the waiting list in accordance with the date and time they were received by the school, subject to section 4.8. For the avoidance of doubt, selection criteria are not relevant to, and will not be applied to, late applications.

Where the school is not oversubscribed, *i.e.* there is no waiting list, and it receives a late application, the Student seeking admission will receive an offer of a place within the school,

subject to section 4.8 and the same process as applies to Applicants whose applications were received before the closing date will be applied, *i.e.* an Acceptance Form will be issued to the Applicant for completion and return to the school within 2 weeks of issue.

### **5.5      Second/third-round offers of a place**

Where a student is in receipt of an offer of a place within the school but does not accept the offer, or the school withdraws the offer in line with the relevant provisions of this Policy, the place will be offered to the next Student on the waiting list in a second-round of offers. This process will continue throughout third and fourth rounds *etc.* until all places within the relevant Group have been filled.

### **5.6      Acceptance of a place**

If the Student in respect of whom the application is made is offered a place, the Applicant will be issued with an Acceptance Form by the school.

The Applicant shall indicate acceptance of an offer by fully completing and returning the Acceptance Form by the date set out in the School Admission Notice, or within 2 weeks of issuing by the school if it is a late application or if it is a second/third-round offer. This includes indicating whether or not s/he has applied for and is awaiting confirmation of an offer of admission from another school.

Failure to fully complete and return the Acceptance Form to the school by the date set out in the School Admission Notice, or within 2 weeks of issuing by the school if it is a late application or if it is a second/third-round offer, may result in withdrawal of an offer, in line with the grounds for withdrawal of an offer, as set out below.

### **5.7      Refusal**

Where a student in respect of whom an application is being sought has not been offered a school place, the Applicant will be provided in writing with:

- 5.5.1.      The reasons that the student was not offered a place in Cara Community Special School.
- 5.5.2.      Details of the Student's ranking against the published selection criteria, if the class-group to which the Applicant is applying is oversubscribed.
- 5.5.3.      Details of the Student's place on the waiting list, if applicable; and
- 5.5.4.      Details of the Applicant's right to appeal the decision.

In addition to the conditions for consideration of an application as set out at 4.8 an offer of admission may not be made where:

- 5.5.5. The information contained in the application is false or misleading in a material respect.

## **5.8 Withdrawal of an offer**

An offer of admission may be withdrawn where:

- 5.6.1. The information contained in the application is false or misleading in a material respect, or
- 5.6.2. The 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 for the academic year for which s/he is applying, or in the case of a late application, or second/third-round offer, within 2 weeks, or
- 5.6.3. An Applicant has not indicated:
  - (i) whether or not s/he has applied for and is awaiting confirmation of an offer from another school(s) and if so, the details of the school(s).  
and
  - (ii) whether or not s/he has accepted an offer of admission from another school(s) and if so, the details of the offer(s).

If an offer of a place is withdrawn by the school, the student on whose behalf the application was made shall lose his/her place for that academic year (and shall not be placed on a waiting list). If the Applicant still desires a place for that academic year, a new application must be made for the same academic year on behalf of that Student and shall be treated as a late application in line with section 5.4 above.

# SECTION 6

## APPEALS

### 6. APPEALS

#### 6.1. **Appeal where refusal was due to oversubscription:**

An Applicant who was refused admission because the school is oversubscribed and who wishes to appeal this decision must first request a review by the board of management in writing, via a 'BOMR1 Form', available from the school office and at <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/8248c-appeals-in-relation-to-refusal-to-admit-a-student-due-to-a-school-being-oversubscribed/#how-to-seek-a-review-by-the-board-of-management>, for it to be reviewed by the board of management of Cara Community Special School. Such a review must be sought by the Applicant within twenty-one calendar days of the school's decision to refuse to admit. However, if a different time period for the bringing of such an appeal is specified by the Minister for Education and Youth after the publication of this Policy, same shall apply instead. Completed BOMR1 Forms should be submitted to the school office or online by emailing [caracss@lmetb.ie](mailto:caracss@lmetb.ie).

If an Applicant is not satisfied with the decision of the board of management, or the board of management is not in a position to review the decision to refuse admission, the Applicant may apply to bring an appeal to an Appeals Committee established by the Minister for Education and Youth under section 29A of the Education Act 1998. Appeals must be made in writing on a 'Section 29 Appeal Form', available at <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/8248c-appeals-in-relation-to-refusal-to-admit-a-student-due-to-a-school-being-oversubscribed/#how-to-appeal-if-a-child-has-been-refused-admission-because-the-school-is-full> and submitted to the Section 29 Appeals Administration Unit in the Department of Education and Youth or the appeal can be submitted online by uploading the required documentation at <https://www.section29appeals.gov.ie/>. Contact details for the Unit are available on the Department's website. As per the Department of Education and Youth's '*Procedures for hearing and determining appeals under section 29*', such an appeal must not be brought until the Applicant has received correspondence from the board of management in relation to the review, or until 42 calendar days have passed since the date of initial refusal,

whichever is earlier, and the appeal may not be brought later than 63 calendar days after the initial decision to refuse admission.

**6.2. Appeal where refusal was for a reason other than oversubscription:**

An Applicant who was refused admission to Cara Community Special School for a reason other than the school being oversubscribed and who wishes to appeal this decision may first choose to request a review by the board of management, via a 'BOMR1 Form', available from the school office and at <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/31D4f-appeals-in-relation-to-refusal-to-admit-a-student-for-a-reason-other-than-the-school-being-oversubscribed/#how-to-seek-a-review-by-the-board-of-management>, for it to be reviewed by the board of management of Cara Community Special School. Such a review must be sought by the Applicant within twenty-one calendar days of the school's decision to refuse to admit. However, if a different time period for the bringing of such an appeal is specified by the Minister for Education and Youth after the publication of this Policy, same shall apply instead. Completed BOMR1 Forms should be submitted to the school office or online by emailing Caracss@lmetb.ie. (An applicant may withdraw a request for review at any time prior to the conclusion of the review by notifying the board of management in writing to that effect.)

Alternatively, s/he may choose to apply to bring an appeal to an Appeals Committee established by the Minister for Education and Youth under section 29A of the Education Act 1998. Appeals must be made in writing on a 'Section 29 Appeal Form', available at <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/31D4f-appeals-in-relation-to-refusal-to-admit-a-student-for-a-reason-other-than-the-school-being-oversubscribed/#how-to-appeal-if-my-child-has-been-refused-admission-and-the-school-has-places-available> and must be submitted to the Section 29 Appeals Administration Unit in the Department of Education and Youth or the appeal can be submitted online by uploading the required documentation at <https://www.section29appeals.gov.ie/>. As per the Department of Education and Youth's '*Procedures for hearing and determining appeals under section 29*', such an appeal may not be brought later than 63 calendar days after the initial decision to refuse admission.

If an Applicant who seeks a review by the board of management is not satisfied with the decision of the board of management, that Applicant may also apply to bring an appeal to an Appeals Committee established by the Minister for Education and Youth under section 29A of the Education Act 1998, as outlined in the immediately preceding paragraph.

**6.3. Basis for a review by the board of management:**

As required by section 29C (2) of the Education Act 1998, any request for the board of management to review a decision of the school to refuse admission must be based on the implementation of this Admission Policy, the content of the school's Admission Notice and also set out the grounds of the request to review the decision.