1. **INTRODUCTION**

The Board of Management of St. Michael’s House Special National School, Raheny hereby sets out its Enrolment Policy in accordance with the provisions of the Education Act 1998. The Board of Management trusts that by doing so parent/guardians will be assisted in relation to enrolment matters. The Chairperson of the Board of Management and the Principal will be happy to clarify any matters arising from the policy. Decisions in relation to applications for enrolment are made by the Board of Management of the school.

2. **RATIONALE**

This policy aims to ensure that the appropriate procedures are in place to enable the school

- To make decisions on all applications in an open and transparent manner consistent with the Ethos, the Mission Statement of the school and Patron Body, and legislative requirements.
- To make an accurate and appropriate assessment of the capacity of the school to cater for the needs of applicants in the light of the resources available to it.
- To put in place a framework which will ensure effective and productive relations between pupils, parents/guardians and teachers where a pupil is admitted to the school.

3. **GENERAL SCHOOL INFORMATION**

St. Michael’s House Special National School, Roll No. 19373u
Raheny Road, Phone no. 01 8511600
Raheny, Email rahenyschool@smh.ie
Dublin 5

The school operates within the regulations as outlined in the *Rules for National Schools* and the relevant circulars issued by the Department of Education and Skills (D.E.S.). It is funded by grants from the D.E.S. and supplemented by St. Michael’s House, the Patron Body. Teachers, Special Needs Assistants, Ancillary Services, and Escorts are
resourced by the D.E.S. Additional staffing allocations, i.e. special needs assistants and teachers are determined by the National Council for Special Education.

School starts at 9.30 and finishes at 3.10 for all pupils to facilitate transport to and from school.

**Ethos of the school and the patron** – St. Michael’s House Special National School, Raheny is a special school under the Patronage of St. Michael’s House. St. Michael’s House is a non denominational voluntary organisation affiliated to the Federation of Voluntary Bodies. Within the context and parameters of D.E.S. regulations and programmes, the rights of the patron as set out in the Education Act 1998 and the funding and education resources available, the school supports the principles of:

- inclusiveness for all pupils;
- equality of access and participation in the school for all pupils;
- parent/guardianal choice in relation to enrolment;
- Respect for the diversity of values, beliefs, traditions, languages and ways of life in society.

**Designation** - The school provides education for pupils whose primary assessed disability is a Moderate General Learning Disability. The school depends on grants, teacher resources and other staffing resources provided by the D.E.S. The school operates within the regulations laid down from time to time, by the Department. The school falls under the administration of the Primary / Special Education Sections of the Department of Education and Skills. All school policy must have regard to the resources and funding available to it.

**Catchment Area** - This school caters for children living in the north east city and north east area of north county Dublin. A pupil will be considered for placement in this school if the pupil lives within the designated catchment area and meets the criteria.

**Staffing** - The school currently has 1 Principal, 10 class Teachers and 20 Special Needs Assistants. The school also employs 8 Bus Escorts and a School Secretary.

**Gender Balance and Age Profile** - The school is a coeducational school catering for pupils aged 4 to 18 years. The Board of Management is bound by the D.E.S. Rules for National Schools which provides that pupils may only be enrolled from the age of 4 years and upwards, though compulsory attendance does not apply until the age of 6 years and students should not exceed 18 years by September 1 of the final school year. To facilitate this age band, the range of classes taught are both junior and senior classes and are based on relevant and appropriate peer groupings. There are currently 4 junior classes and 5 senior classes.
School Curriculum - The school follows the curricular programmes prescribed by the D.E.S. for pupils with a Moderate General Learning Disability, amended from time to time, in accordance with Section 9 and 30 of the Education Act (1998), in order to provide an appropriate education for each child. As of 2012/13 academic year, pupils in the senior school also follow the ASDAN programme, a recognised certified programme from Scotland. The curricular programmes provided by the school are adapted to meet the particular special educational needs of each child, and an eclectic approach to learning using a variety of methodologies and strategies are adopted to maximise the pupils’ learning potential. All pupils have an Individual Education Plan designed specifically for them.

School Calendar - The school operates a school calendar for primary schools which is effective from the week in which the 1st September falls with traditional openings and closings at Summer, Christmas, Easter and Mid Terms as laid down and directed from time to time in Circulars issued by the D.E.S. regarding Standardisation of The School Year.

School Multi-Disciplinary Team (M.D.T.) – In addition to fulfilling the formal role of School Patron, as required by the D.E.S., St. Michael’s House provides clinical supports to the school in the form of a multidisciplinary team which combines the expertise from the fields of Psychology, Psychiatry, Social Work, Speech and Language Therapy, Physiotherapy and Occupational Therapy, Paediatrician and Dietician. Access to the MDT is on a referral basis. Referrals are then prioritised. All new referrals will be discussed with the Team in the spring and summer terms for enrolment for the following September.

4. APPLICATION/ REFERRAL PROCEDURE

- It is the policy of the school that all enquiries, referrals and applications for enrolment to this school are considered in a fair and equitable manner and responded to efficiently.

- The school provides education for pupils whose primary assessed disability is a Moderate General Learning Disability. Only pupils assessed within this range are eligible to apply for a place in the school.

- St. Michael’s House, as Patron, requires that all new expressions of interest for school placement be directed to the New Referrals Committee in St Michael’s House, Ballymun Road, Glasnevin, Dublin 9. This is to ensure that the prospective pupil may access the wider range of services which are offered by the patron, including clinical input. This team comprises of senior clinicians in the services of St. Michael’s House.
• The psychologist or a parent/guardian may contact the school to arrange a meeting. The Principal will meet with the parent/guardian of the child to discuss the child’s needs and the school’s suitability and/or capacity to meet those needs. The child’s details and records of this meeting will be placed on the record of Expression of Interest.

• When parents/guardians are satisfied that they would like their child to come to St. Michael’s House SNS, they should request an application form. Parent/guardians are given a copy of the enrolment policy with the application form.

• Parent/guardians must then return the following:
  - Fully completed application form signed by one or both parents/guardians
  - Psychological Assessment (if the school has not already received it)
  - Any other available professional reports such as
    - Psychiatric Assessment
    - Current School Report
    - Individual Education Plan from current school
    - Speech & Language Report
    - Social Work Report
    - Physiotherapy & Occupational Therapy Reports
    - Medical Report as appropriate.

An application will be valid when all supporting/required documentation as outlined above is received by the school.

• Closing date for applications will be 6th February.

• Following receipt of all documents the MDT, the Principal and Deputy Principal will meet after the closing date to determine the allocation of places, as per the criteria set out in this policy. This will then be agreed with the Chairperson of the Board of Management before being presented to the Board.

• Having considered each application, the Principal submits the recommended list of names to the Board of Management prior to offering places for their consideration and decision. The Principal as secretary to the Board of Management will formally offer a place in writing to the parents/guardians, within 21 days of the closing date for applications.
• Parents/guardians will be requested to respond by a specified date, typically one week, as stated on the letter of offer and to include completed enrolment form.

• If the number of applicants has exceeded the vacancies, names of those applicants who meet the criteria set out in the Enrolment Policy will be kept on file for consideration should a suitable vacancy in an appropriate class become available. Parents/guardians of these applicants will be informed in writing, within 21 days of the closing date. Parents/guardians will be advised of the appeals procedure, as outlined in the Enrolment Policy.

• Parents/guardians of applicants who do not meet the criteria as set out in the Enrolment Policy, and therefore cannot be offered a place, will be notified in writing within 21 days of the closing date. The reason for this decision will be clearly stated. Parents/guardians will be advised of the appeals procedure, as outlined in the Enrolment Policy.

• When the successful applicants have accepted places, the New Referrals Committee (S.M.H.) will be informed of the children who have accepted places.

• Where the Board deems that further resources are required to meet the child’s needs a request is submitted to the Special Education Needs Organiser (S.E.N.O.) as outlined in the psychological, medical and/or other reports. These resources may include access to or the provision of any or a combination of the following: visiting teacher service, special needs assistant, specialised equipment or furniture, transport services or other. Parents/guardians will need to complete relevant National Council for Special Education (N.C.S.E.) documentation to enable the school secure such resources.

• Following enrolment the most suitable form of introduction will be agreed to meet the child’s needs. This may initially be a short day, gradually increasing to a full day or week, depending on the special needs of the child and recommendations in supporting documentation. If a shorter day is recommended, parents/guardians are asked to collect their children from school. Following review, this should be increased to full days/weeks over a suitable period of time.

• Due to Transport arrangements pupils attend for the full school day i.e. 5 hours 40 minutes in all classes.
• Some families may wish to bring their child to school during the initial introduction period. The parents/guardians and the Principal will agree arrangements for this. The school will attempt to facilitate any such reasonable arrangements.

• The parents/guardians will be expected to give an undertaking that they will co-operate in every reasonable way with the school policies, practices and guidelines.

5. CONSIDERATION OF APPLICATIONS

While recognising the rights of parents/guardians to enrol their child in the school of their choice, the Board of Management of St. Michael’s House Special National School has also a responsibility to respect the rights of the existing school community and in particular the children already enrolled. This requires balanced judgements, which are guided by the principles of natural justice and acting in the best interests of the children. Assisting the school in such circumstances, the Board of Management, with due regard for the Patron’s wishes, reserves the right to determine the maximum number of children in each separate classroom bearing in mind:

- The size and available space in classrooms
- The availability of grants and teacher resources provided by the DES
- The educational needs of children of a particular age
- The presence of children with behavioural/specific needs
- The DES maximum class average directives
- The needs of the child proposed for enrolment can be met and the impact of the enrolment on the proposed class group.

The following criteria will be used when considering and prioritising a referral to any given class:

- The child has a recent psychological report stating that the child’s primary assessed disability is a Moderate General Learning Disability.
- The child is aged between 4 and 18 years.
- There is a recommendation from a psychologist for placement in a special school for pupils with a moderate general learning disability.
- This school is the nearest appropriate designated school.
- The placement in a class is age appropriate.
- The impact of the enrolment on the proposed class group.
6. **PUPIL’S TRANSFERRING**

The Board of Management will provide for the transfer of pupils to the school at any time during the school year subject to this school policy, available space, and with the approval of the D.E.S. The school will adhere to the provisions of the Education Welfare Act (2000) in relation to the transfer of pupils to this school including the requirement that information concerning attendance be communicated between the schools. Similar guidelines will be followed for the transfer of pupils from St. Michael’s House Special National School to another school.

7. **REFUSAL TO ENROL ON GROUNDS OF EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES**

The Board of Management of Raheny Special National School reserves the right to refuse to enrol a pupil in rare and exceptional circumstances. The grounds for refusal on exceptional circumstances include:

- In the opinion of the Board the pupil has special needs such that, even with additional resources available from the Department of Education and Skills, the school cannot meet such needs and / or provide the pupil with an appropriate education.
- In the opinion of the Board the pupil poses an unacceptable risk to other pupils and may compromise their education.
- In the opinion of the Board the pupil poses an unacceptable risk to school staff and / or school property.

8. **APPEALS**

Section 29 of the Education Act 1998, gives parent/guardians the right to appeal decisions made by a B.O.M (or a person acting on behalf of the Board). Parent/guardians who are dissatisfied with an enrolment decision, may appeal to the B.O.M.

- Appeals must be addressed to the Chairperson of the Board, stating the grounds for appeal, and lodged within ten days of receiving the letter of refusal from the school to enrol.
- Parent/guardians if unhappy with the result of this appeal may appeal to the D.E.S. under Section 29 of the Education Act on the official form provided by the Department. This appeal must be lodged within 42 calendar days of the refusal from the school to enrol.
9. **CODE OF BEHAVIOUR and ANTI BULLYING POLICY**

The school has appended the Code of Behaviour and Anti Bullying Policy to this Enrolment policy. All parent/guardians will be required to sign an undertaking to uphold the Code of Behaviour and Anti Bullying Policy and to make all reasonable efforts to assist their child to comply with the contents of both. Parents/guardians will also be given a copy of the Child Protection Policy and Intimate Care Policy.

10. **REVIEW**

The school is subject to the Education Act (1998), The Education Welfare Act (2000), The Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act (2004) and all relevant Equality Legislation. The Board of Management will review its Enrolment Policy on an annual basis to ensure compliance with statutory requirements.

11. **RATIFICATION AND COMMUNICATION**

This policy has been approved by the Patron Body and was ratified by the Board of Management on 13/01/15. The policy will be made available to all parents/guardians of children in the school on request. Arrangements are made to communicate the policy to all parents/guardians on application for a placement in the school.

Signed: ___________________________________________

Catherine Whelan, Chairperson, Board of Management